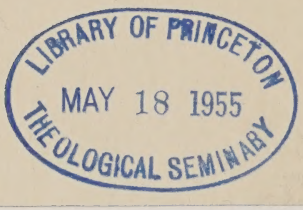
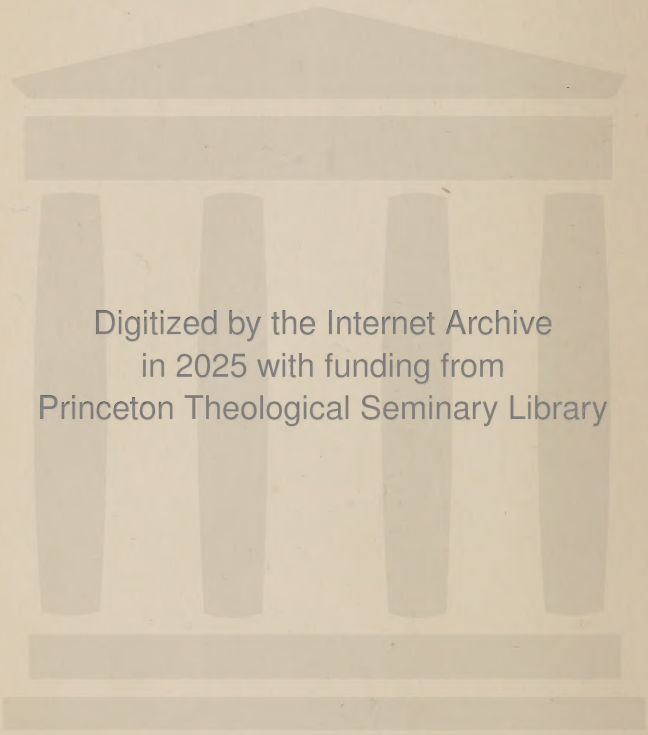
St.



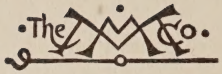
BS 2415 .B879 1935
Brown-Serman, Stanley, 1883-
What did Jesus think?



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

https://archive.org/details/whatdidjesusthin00brow

WHAT DID JESUS THINK?



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO · DALLAS
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
OF CANADA, LIMITED
TORONTO

WHAT DID JESUS THINK?

Studies in the Mind of Christ

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAY 18 1955
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY

STANLEY BROWN-SERMAN

M.A., B.D.

Professor of New Testament Language and Literature in the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia

AND

HAROLD ADYE PRICHARD

M.A. (OXON.), D.D.

Rector of St. Mark's Church, Mt. Kisco, N. Y., and Honorary Canon of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City

NEW YORK

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1935

Copyright, 1935, by
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

All rights reserved—no part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who wishes to quote brief passages in connection with a review written for inclusion in magazine or newspaper.

Set up and printed.
Published, February, 1935.

SET UP BY BROWN BROTHERS LINOTYPERS
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE FERRIS PRINTING COMPANY

PREFACE

WHAT think ye of Christ? That is an old question, but it awaits our answer. What are we to think of Him? Possibly there has never been a time, since the dawn of Christianity, when that question has been asked more insistently or more anxiously than today. Many people, even those within the Church, are confused and bewildered; they do not know what to think, and they are asking questions. That is the only justification of our attempt to add still another to the innumerable studies of Jesus.

What are we to think about Christ? Important as this question is, it does not seem to us that it is the first one to be considered. We shall not learn to think rightly about Jesus till we have discovered what He thought about Himself. Any estimate of Him which does not take into account His own self-estimate is likely to be wrong. If we do not start with the known mind of Jesus we are in danger of creating a system which leaves the real Christ out, of painting a picture which, however striking it may be, bears little resemblance to Him whom we seek to portray. We may end by offering men nothing to live by except the little that may prove

cogent in our own reasonings. The question with which we should begin is, What did Jesus think of Himself?

This book is an essay toward the understanding of the mind of Jesus. We have attempted a difficult task. It is hard to read ourselves back, with insight and sympathy, into the thoughts of an age different, in most of its outlooks, from our own. It is hard really to know the mind of any man; and the difficulty becomes greater when the mind we seek to know escapes the commonplace, and falls within the category of genius. The task becomes almost insuperable when we try to understand Christ. If we have attempted it at all, it is because we feel that there is much in the language and thought of the day, familiar to Jesus, which can help us to a deeper appreciation of His mind.

Our approach is therefore historical. It begins with the thoughts and ideas within which Jesus lived. How far Jesus overleaped the bounds of His time and country, Christian experience has born witness. Our contention is to be that, in His significant appeal, Jesus escapes the confines of the narrowly historical within which some would keep Him, just because He was Himself aware that He could not be kept strictly within them. But He was of a certain time and place; He made use of certain thoughts and ideas. Through them He sought to express His mind. It is by understanding these, therefore, that we can best hope to understand Him.

The critical presuppositions of the book are those of

modern historical scholarship. We have generally confined ourselves to the Synoptic tradition, which begins with the ministry of the Baptist. Even within that tradition we have given preference to what appear to be the most primitive elements. Except in one instance, therefore, we have made no use of the infancy narratives, and have not drawn upon the Fourth Gospel. This restriction was deliberate, since we judged it wise to limit our study to those portions of the Gospels which would be regarded by the greatest number as the surest grounds for a historical study. Since the book has been written for the general reader, and not for the technical expert, we have included nothing in the way of critical discussion, though a careful critical examination of the material we have used is to be presupposed. We cannot hope that everyone will agree, either with the choice of our material, or with the interpretation we have put upon it. In particular, it might be felt that we have not sufficiently taken into account the modifying effect of the thought of the primitive Church upon the tradition in regard to Jesus and His teaching. Certainly, within the generation in which that tradition was fluid, and much of it unwritten, modifications did take place, especially in the direction of adapting material to the practical needs of a living Church. We may suppose that, in certain cases, the form of the tradition has been altered, but we may still regard its substance and purpose as congruous with the mind of Jesus, who thought

of Himself and His mission in the way in which we must believe that He did. Thus, for instance, we cannot regard the Synoptic passages which represent Jesus as forgiving sin as the creations of the primitive community to justify or enforce their own practice of absolution. It seems historically truer to say that forgiveness was Jesus' own deduction from what He felt Himself to be and the office which He held.

Our approach has been critical and historical, but we have not kept ourselves within the limits of the purely critical or historical. In the first two chapters, which deal with the boyhood and youth of Jesus, we are outside the realm of history proper. There are few recorded facts upon which to draw. But even here there are certainly deductions to be made from the circumstances of the time, and inferences from the later life of Jesus, which make assumptions possible and reasonable. Beyond these we have tried not to go. We have been concerned to point out not only facts, but their interpretation, and their values for present day living. As has been said, this is not a book for the technical scholar. It is written for the men and women who want to know not only what Christ was, but how He can help them to think and live.

The book is a joint production. Both of us have made contributions to every chapter, though not always to the same extent. What we have contributed has been discussed between us, and revised in the light of our

discussion. The book therefore, in the main, if not in every detail, represents our common point of view. We have thought it wise not to attempt the unsatisfactory experiment of simply alternating sections or chapters by either of us, a method which could only draw attention to differences of style or treatment, but to give to the whole the unity which could only come by its being written by a single hand.

It would be impossible to mention all the writers to whom we are in some measure indebted, but we should like to acknowledge the help we have received from certain scholars whose works are most available to English readers. These are Dr. A. E. J. Rawlinson, "The Gospel according to St. Mark," Dr. A. H. McNeile, "The Gospel according to St. Matthew," Dr. Burton Scott Easton, "The Gospel according to St. Luke," "Christ in the Gospels," and "The Gospel before the Gospels," Dr. Ernest F. Scott, "The Ethical Teaching of Jesus," and "The Kingdom of God," and Dr. Burnett H. Streeter, "The Four Gospels."

STANLEY BROWN-SERMAN.
HAROLD ADYE PRICHARD.

Passion Sunday,
March 18, 1934.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	PREFACE	v
CHAPTER		
I.	DISCOVERY	1
II.	THE TEMPLE	21
III.	BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION	41
IV.	THE KINGDOM OF GOD	65
V.	THE SON OF MAN	95
VI.	THE SON OF MAN AS THE KINGDOM	124
VII.	JESUS AND THE FATHER	153
VIII.	LEGALIST OR MORALIST?	181
IX.	GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST	207
X.	THE CROSS	235
XI.	THE PERMANENT CHRIST	259

WHAT DID JESUS THINK?

CHAPTER I

DISCOVERY

No man can probably ever know with any fullness what goes on in the mind of another man. Even though that other man tries, to the best of his ability, to divulge his personality, yet there must be heights and depths that always remain secret. And the greater the man, the less comprehensible would the sum total of his self-consciousness appear to be, for his greatness is conditioned by the degree in which he is influenced by those abstract verities which, themselves beyond our perfect understanding, yet alone give substance and meaning to human character. It is a trite saying that a man makes his own world, as he makes, by interpretation, his own God. Nevertheless it is a true and suggestive saying; for a man can only construe the meaning of the objective realities of nature, the being of God, and humanity's approach to the confused riddle of living, by means of an intimate and personal touchstone that lies somewhere in his own heart and soul. His estimate of all that is, physical and spiritual, is really his estimate of what all that is has to do with him, and what he has to do with it. Should we desire to know

what any man thinks of the elemental factors of human life, it is only necessary to find out what he thinks of himself; for the answer is written there. In the case of a Napoleon it may be written in words of Power; in the case of an Einstein in words of Knowledge; in the case of a St. Francis in words of Humility; in the case of a Jesus—can we ever know?

Ever since mankind developed the capacity for reason it has been endeavouring to discover what the realities of life mean—such realities as birth and death and pain and faith and love and immortality—and, for the last two thousand years, its search has been, in most manifest and powerful expressions, influenced, if not directed, by the genius of one great explorer, Jesus Christ. If we could only know what these things meant to Him, we believe we should know, once and for all, what these things really are. Therefore, that we may realize the truth, and its bearing on our lives, we seize upon every indication of it that is given in His life—in that sublime depth of self-intuition which stands revealed in His words and acts and destiny. He is the only figure on the stage of history who appears to have felt Himself, at the end, not as being in touch with reality, but as being Himself reality—the Way, the Truth, the Life. We occupy our little hours in questioning Why and How—the sequence of times and seasons: He asked no question as to Why and How—He was the Cause, the Method, and the Result. And so, as His

mature record bears witness, He was self-regarded. And so we call Him God.

But it is fair—and neither irreverent nor unimportant—to ask whether He always so regarded Himself. It will help us, perhaps, in our understanding of our own spiritual problem if we can arrive at some appreciation of the method of His approach to His spiritual problem. For His problem was not, in its essence, unique. It was, to a deeper degree certainly than it can be for us, an effort to combine what we call human and what we call divine in one effectual life: but even from us some such effort is demanded. Mankind has chosen to regard certain aspects of human personality as divine, certain aspects of divine personality as human. Experience has not, as yet, been far-reaching enough to prove whether there is any such real and valid distinction; it has, at least, been prudent enough to refrain from denying a possible identity. And Jesus alone seems to suggest the clue to the direction in which the solution must lie—in that relationship between Father and Son which is the epitome and consummation of all human and divine relationships. To substantiate proof of the reality of the unity between Fatherhood and Sonship He sacrificed His life.

The purpose of this book is to estimate, in however imperfect a way, the steps that led Jesus to this conviction. The questions that arise for consideration are extremely vital. If He was not always conscious of this

sense of complete and matured oneness with the Father —and that He was, in any perfect degree, seems, in the light of the Synoptic tradition, so unlikely as barely to merit consideration—how did the disclosure come? What were the stages in the process of self-revelation that raised Him from the carpenter's bench to the Cross? What were the influences that worked in His heart and mind and soul in boyhood, and young manhood, and during the early ministry? Can we form any truthful picture of that expanding beauty that blossomed at last upon the Mount of Transfiguration? Even an approximation to a sympathetic answer is difficult, partly for the reason that the sources of authentic information are so limited—nothing more than the simple scriptural account and a few trustworthy traditions. If only Jesus had kept a diary, or written intimate letters to some boyhood friend! But our quest is worthwhile if it stimulates in any earnest heart a fresh interest in or sympathy with the glory that was Christ.

The first assumption that is necessary, in a study of His mind, is that the child Jesus was, in His estimate of Himself, much the same as every other normal little boy. And, to understand what that means, it is profitable to estimate some of the influences that bore upon Him, as they did, in other degrees, upon any one of His playmates.

One of the most important and far-reaching was the background of racial heritage. The Jews were not self-

conscious persons; but they were a self-conscious people. To a greater degree than is true of any other race, even the Greeks, they were individually aware of a national destiny. The thought of the Fatherhood of God was scarcely found in the Old Testament in an intimate, personal sense. He was the Father of the nation. In that quiet and devout and orthodox home at Nazareth the atmosphere must have been steeped in the aura of prophetic promise, in the passionate outpouring of gratitude for God's thousand-year-long care for His chosen people, in the exaltation of faith and hope that continued national and personal piety would at last bring the longed-for racial redemption. No intelligent boy in such a home as that could avoid asking himself some questions as to the part he was going to be called upon to play. A national consciousness is only kept alive by a sense of personal responsibility.

The Galilee of those days was a troubled place. Throughout Jesus' life it was ruled by Herod Antipas, a wily, harsh prince who crushed the land with local taxation. He was an Idumaean by race, a Jew only by profession; and had, accordingly, none of the racial pride which had distinguished such leaders as the Maccabees. His hand lay heavy upon the peasants. They paid a poll tax: they paid for their fruit trees, and the produce of what land they owned. The spectre of virtual slavery was never far away, for, with the gradual disappearance of the last semblance of national inde-

pendence under the growing power of Rome, shown by the establishment of the procuratorship in Judaea in A.D. 6, the shadow of individual servitude grew blacker and blacker. What was this Rome, imperial and tyrannous, so far across the seas? Why did she trouble this God-fearing people who wanted no more than to be allowed to live in the simplicity of the beauty of holiness? How often must the blood, even of a little Jewish boy, have been stirred with resentment at the sight of the companies of haughty Roman soldiers who used His land so mercilessly?

It was Galilee especially that seethed with discontent. It was there that rebels, frequently with Messianic claims, gathered malcontent crowds, and often harried Roman sympathizer and Jewish patriot alike. The fiercest of these Galilean nationalist movements took place during the boyhood of Jesus, at such close quarters that He must actually have seen some of the consequences. Judas, the Galilean, gathered a large and turbulent force at Sepphoris, an hour's ride from Nazareth, and wasted the country, until he was crushed by the Roman general, Varus. With Judas began the Zealot movement—the splendidly mistaken dream of that body of men who linked the Messianic hope with the sword, and identified the beginning of the inevitable Kingdom of God with the overthrow of Rome. In A.D. 6, Quirinius, the Roman governor of Syria, made a census of Palestine. This hated procedure—specifi-

cally condemned in the Old Testament—fanned these Zealot hopes and activities to white heat. The souls of the Jewish people were stirred within them throughout all the divisions of the land. Were these days, perhaps, to hear, in the clash of battle, the prelude of salvation?

Even if none of these movements directly affected the daily life of Nazareth, in the safe remoteness of its hills, still they must have been discussed in every household and have called forth passionate comment wherever the townsmen met together. It would have been unnatural had not Jesus, in common with the other boys of His age, debated what part or lot one who was a true patriot had to take in these revolutionary programmes. Was this to be the line of His activity—to take up the sword in defence of a national ideal? Probably there were times when, in His childish eyes, the necessity and the glory of doing so seemed compelling. Jesus was no pacifist. The cool maturity of later wisdom showed Him, perhaps, that there were better ways than the sword of establishing freedom, but never, in His approach to the hard realities of life, was He weak or pusillanimous. He had seen something of men who were unhesitatingly willing to give up their lives for the cause of their nation: surely He too was willing to give up His life if this cause lay clear cut before Him. The possibility of doing so must have been one of the first impressions of His childhood. He must have some-

times played at war, as all little boys sometimes play at war—especially with war so close at hand.

But another set of influences came to Him from the quiet sanctity of His home. Joseph, as one may readily surmise from all we know of his character, belonged to a second pronounced group of patriots—men who, equally with the first alive to the practical dangers and miseries of the situation, yet found the hope of deliverance, not in the sword, but in the mercy of God. They had no confidence in the revolutionary method: they had, indeed, no confidence in any human method save that of an inner moral reformation, which at last would give God encouragement enough to establish His Kingdom in the world as a new and definitely spiritual creation. This group saw in the Zealot movement only a perverse attempt to wring the Kingdom from God's hands by wrong and unavailing means. The Messiah of such a kingdom as the Kingdom of God could hardly, they thought, be of such a type as Judas, the Galilean.

It is this mind and mood which is reflected in the Gospel canticles, the Benedictus, the Magnificat, the Nunc Dimittis. Whatever may have been the origin of these verses, they are certainly expressive of the simple Messianic piety and expectation to be found in a devout household during the first quarter of the first century. Perhaps Joseph's family chanted together such psalms as these during their hours of private worship. And doubtless they had their influence on the expanding mind

of Jesus. But their tone is hardly such as would inspire the efforts of a crusader. They lack the conquering, dynamic note, which sings in the soul of heroes. They did little more than increase in Him, perhaps, that sentimental regard for a God whom He, in common with all the true believers of His race, was already beginning to reverence, as holding in His hands the eventual salvation of mankind. It is not characteristic of a boy's nature to wait, to watch, to endure in inaction. Jesus doubtless felt that God must be purposefully helped.

The national surroundings of Jesus' boyhood were, then, such as to breed in Him a sense of the need of reformation. Something had to be done—and done quickly—to save the seed of His forefathers, if not from extermination, at least from indescribable misery and disgrace. Visions danced about Him—the visions of those young men of all the ages of Israel who had had the spirit poured out upon them to dream dreams—strange visions of salvation, of the Messiah, of rule over all the nations of the world, of peace, of prosperity. How were they to be fulfilled? How, with the tyranny of Rome on one side and the tyranny of abjectness and poverty on the other, could God be assisted by a little Jewish boy in working His purpose out to whatever its consummation might be?

More influential, of course, in these early formative years, than the politics of His race were these impressions which came from the environment and atmos-

phere of His home. It was, as we have seen, placed among a peasant population, and removed, as far as was possible in a country of such small extent, from the fierce religious movements of the metropolitan centres. For nearly thirty years He lived there, making, as Justin Martyr says, ox-goads and ploughs. Nazareth was a town of carpenters and wood cutters. Joseph himself was a carpenter, and as he lived until Jesus was at least twelve years old, he had time to teach the boy something of his trade. The rest of His family consisted of His mother, Mary, who lived to see Him on the Cross, four brothers and two sisters. The various domestic cross currents are hard to determine. Joseph is never mentioned by Jesus. Perhaps he died before he was able to impress the effect of his personality upon the growing boy. If he did, he left the chief responsibility for the support of mother, brothers and sisters upon the shoulders of a lad who was too noble to deny the obligation, though He may have thought of it as transient and inconsiderable. But it meant hard work. Hard work! But salvation is hard work. It must be learned in a finished school. It was easier to fashion an ox-goad out of the fibre of a tree than to mould the soul of Zacchaeus or Nicodemus into the pattern of values that do not pass away. If Joseph taught nothing else, perhaps he taught that perfection comes only from constant and self-sacrificing effort. He did his best with plank and log; he taught his Son to do like-

wise. Did he realize that the effort of hewing to the line is just as important in regard to a human heart as it is in the fitting of a yoke?

It was the home of a typical artisan. How wise of God to let Jesus know the taste of early discipline in a home of the poor! The world's multitudes are poor; their tastes and understanding are the tastes and understanding of the under-privileged. Into one of their families came Jesus—and yet the world has been different ever since. He might have been born in the purple of palaces—but, if He had, He would talk a different language from mine. He might have been heralded with trumpets and hosannas—but, if He had, His world would have had a different sound from mine. He knew the outpouring of the poor because He was poor. He knew the importance of self-sacrificing effort because He had to work. He understood the meaning of simplicity because He was simple. There is nothing in His early surroundings that could have made Him desire, except through the discontent of contrast, any worldly prerogative or prize. It is remarkable in Him that He seemed to appreciate so deeply the tragedy of high position.

A Jewish boy, until He was five, was under the care of His mother. His education would begin at home, following the old command in Deuteronomy, 6:4, and onwards—"Listen, Israel; the Eternal, the Eternal alone, is our God. And you must love the Eternal, your

God, with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength. These words you must learn by heart, this charge of mine; you must impress them on your children, you must talk about them when you are sitting at home, and when you are on the road, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You must tie them on your hands as a memento, and wear them on your forehead as a badge; you must inscribe them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates." One may be certain that, in such a household as the household of Nazareth, such commands were carried out to the letter. Jesus must, from His earliest boyhood, have known the longings and the directions of the great teachers of His race. And how much must they have gained in the telling from the lips of the gentle mother, Mary? No man can ever know what his mother gave him. Something of that intimate and universally recognized power in the relationship of mother and son may have passed over into Jesus' later philosophy. Often enough He speaks of the bond between Father and Son; and the bond is all-satisfying. May it not be that, in His recognition of it, there was the recognition of something else —those qualities of minute, daily care which only a mother is qualified to give? When we speak, as He spoke, of God the Father, do we not most usually mean God the Parent?

Joseph, as Klausner says, "would, in addition to craftsmanship, teach his son the Torah." Thus early

was laid His reverence for the righteousness and the law of God, a reverence which would find itself strengthened and purified by the life of law that was exemplified in His own home. Religion was a simpler thing in a hill town of Galilee than it was in larger centres—much simpler than in Judaea. The Old Testament was still supreme. Modern interpreters had not arisen to confuse its symmetry. The Law was still the Law, and God was still God. No one had dared to question the authority or the meaning of either. At six or seven Jesus would have gone to the Synagogue School, for at this time practically every Jewish community had its synagogue, and the synagogue was essentially a teaching centre. Such a school, in a place like Nazareth, was probably not large, nor particularly well organized, since it was a matter of common knowledge that most Galilean peasants were *am ha-aretz*—ignorant of the Torah—; and the time was half a century too early for the school system established by the High Priest, Joshua ben Gamala.

In this Synagogue School the most widely considered subject was, of course, the all-important Law—those books of Moses without which, it was assumed, the religion of Jehovah could not stand. But, in addition to this, time was given to the history and poetry of Israel, and to what evidently made the deepest impression of all upon Jesus, the writings of the prophets. In these He found the golden dreams, the invincible hopes,

of His people's future. In these He read of the Kingdom that was to be, of the fulfillment of God's will on earth, of the forthcoming splendour of Abraham's and David's seed. How congenial the study was! It fitted in exactly with the devotional aspirations of the circle to which He belonged. They too were waiting for the consolation of Israel. The consolation of Israel! How timely the phrase! The consolation of Israel, needed indeed in downtrodden Galilee! Then there were other stimulating books such as Enoch, popular though uncanonical, filled with the visions that were to come true when the reign of righteousness should have supplanted the kingdoms of violence and evil.

The ruler of the synagogue, as always, was a layman, not a priest. He may have been more interested in local affairs, in the ebb and flow of current politics, in the menace of Rome and the decadence of Israel, than in the promise of prophecy. But he did not seem to be able to hold the attention of this boy, Jesus, to such themes as these. His youthful gaze was bent on the future—for the future was still unfulfilled. He searched the prophets—with His imagination, His genius. His face hardened at the stern righteousness of the earlier Isaiah, and softened at the pitying comfort of the later. He seemed, like a woman, to understand the forgiving love of the God of Hosea; like a reformer, to be inflamed by Amos' God of social righteousness; like a conqueror, to picture Daniel's vision of divine triumph;

like a poet, to make vivid the mystical kingdoms of the later seers. And, through it all, as here and there His young mind found a spark of revelation, there ran the thread of a golden far-away hope—the dim uncertain figure of the One who should redeem Israel.

Mysticism is a word but little understood, and still less approved. At the same time it denotes an element of the highest significance in every truly religious nature. It does not mean a state of subjective bliss, when the soul draws in upon itself and closes its faculties to every allurement or distraction of the outside world; nor does it mean a state of such self-surrender to the will or the purpose or the love of God that all individuality is lost in the ecstasy of other-worldly communion. It means, rather, a definite sense of reciprocity. God calls—and, in proportion as He calls, I answer. The grace without is proportioned to the faith within. He does not call me to warm my hands comfortably in inaction at the fire of His goodness to me; He calls me most vitally to reward His goodness by my own goodness. Mysticism is a dynamic, not a passive, mood. Its essence is the feeling of the God in my heart as being harmonious, through every chord, with the God behind the universe.

The mystic is not a dreamer. Jesus was not a dreamer. Though there may have been quiet voices, in the silences of the hills, that bade Him stay there as the forceless poet of a vision, there were other consider-

ations which diverted, if they did not break, the spell. We must remember that the turmoil of nations pressed upon Him from every side. We must remember that His home meant discipline as well as devotion—and discipline, in that and every age, meant action and hard work. We must remember, once more, that Jesus was fully trained in the prophets—that He quotes them, lives with them, breathes their spirit. To say this is to say two things. Firstly, He must have become imbued with something of the prophets' social consciousness, although that phrase would have held no meaning for Him. No one, especially a boy, could become saturated with the spirit of Jeremiah or Ezekiel, and still remain content with a life of reverie, or with piety of a purely individualistic type. The morality of the prophets had inevitable social implications, which drove men out into the whirlpool of human relationships. Their writings were not appropriate food for one who was to give his life to theoretical contemplation. They were a call to arms, never more so than in the age when Jesus lived. And, secondly, the prophets' sense of God was not only a call to, but an experience of, mission. For God to choose a man by admitting him into close relationship with Himself was for God to send him to others. The essence of the prophetic philosophy is the union of life with God, and the consequent necessity of spending that life in service for God. So much would be clear to the quick mind of an intuitive child.

We are not thinking now of the mature Jesus of history; we are thinking of a little Hebrew boy upon whose development the background of nation, home, and school, all made their respective mark. There was doubtless another influence—the natural surroundings of the place in which He lived. Little boys brought up by the sea are different from little boys brought up in the woods. This one was brought up among the hills; and the hills have a message all their own. It became a part of His nature. He lived in an age which made little of natural beauty. St. Paul, and the other New Testament writers, scarcely make mention of it. They draw their figures from city life, from the hubbub of the marketplace and the noise of the stadium. Jesus, on the other hand, is always speaking of it. His most memorable illustrations are drawn from the flowers and the trees, the wild animals, and the serenity of country life. Impressionable as He was to every appeal of sense it could hardly have been otherwise. Klausner describes the beauty of His early surroundings in these words: "Certainly the sight which unfolds itself to-day, as one climbs the hills around Nazareth, is one of the most wonderful in Palestine. To the West are the low lying hills stretching toward the Mediterranean. . . . To the South the valley of Jezreel, framed in bare mountains, with its profusion of green vegetation. . . . To the East is rounded Mt. Tabor. . . . To the Southwest is thickly wooded Carmel falling away to the

Mediterranean. Further East . . . the steep, yellow mountains of Gilead, blown by desert winds. To the North are the mountains of Napthali, the mountains of upper Galilee; while on the northern horizon is the hoary peak of Lebanon." And his comment is sympathetic: "Its majestic beauty must . . . have exerted an influence on Jesus. Later accounts tell how He remained alone in the mountains, under the canopy of heaven, spending the night in prayer. It was there that His young mind, searching His heavenly Father, fashioned itself." One finds a parallel here with the experience of His spiritual forefather, David, who, as a shepherd boy, alone upon the mountains, watching his flocks under the cold glamour of the stars, and, hearing the wind sweep through the strings of his lyre, found that God to whom, ever after, the best of his heart was given. God is greater than the striving life of men. That is the intimate message of nature. Would that we of to-day could find more leisure in which to heed its appeal, and perhaps more sweetly to draw near to its God!

It is not waste of time thus, with all possible reverence, to try to draw aside the veils that hide the childhood thoughts of Christ. It is true that nothing can ever be known for certain—who can ever know what a child thinks?—but there are abundant indications in the life that came after of what must have been the substance of the life that came before. We are not assuming a

unique personality born into the world fully developed. We are not assuming a sense of special revelation carried in His consciousness without growth in clarity and power from cradle to sepulchre. We are assuming, rather, a normal, if precocious, spiritual development—precocious only to the extent that one who later made such claims of preëminent conviction, must have felt that conviction growing within Him from the beginnings of His conscious life. So, following the direction indicated by all the spiritual surroundings of His early years, and immeasurably reinforced by the teaching and tradition of His people, there must have grown in Jesus' mind, in the years in Nazareth, the thought that it would not be impossible that even to Him some measure of special service might have been delegated. Some far-reaching and deep-seated experience was, perhaps, necessary to crystallize these thoughts into a power of revelation that would mark out for Him the supreme fullness of His mission: but such an experience would doubtless come. At any rate He was ready—though the time was not yet. Had He realized from the beginning all that He was, it does not seem likely that He would have delayed so long His public appearance. Jesus was but slowly coming into His own.

At the head of this chapter stands the word "Discovery." All childhood is discovery, though children vary widely in the extent of that which they discover. The measure of their journey is bounded by individual

character, by heredity, by education, and by environment. Judged from these premises it is no wonder that Jesus went beyond the other boys with whom He worked and played, and came in His early years into a realm of spiritual adventure which was closed to them. As to character—He was what He was, what He must have been if the records of His later life are true. As to heredity—behind Him lay the best, the long line of heroes, saints, prophets, and martyrs, whose lives form the sacred tapestry of the history of Israel. As to education—it was all that His day and age afforded, culminating in the knowledge of that consummate poetry which inspired men to look forward, rather than back, and to believe that God had not forgotten, and would never altogether forget, His people. As to environment—there was the sanctity of a perfect home, the worship, the work, and the wonder of the hills. From them all shone out a challenge—to be patient, to be active, to be manly, to be loving, and, in the silence, to remember that God who spoke in season to all His children.

CHAPTER II

THE TEMPLE

It is only to the unimaginative that experience never comes. Spiritual and mental crises in human life are not matters of accident, but the results of disposition. Where the soil of a man's soul is really fertile, it never fails to receive the seed. So it was with Jesus. His aspirations demanded fulfillment; His instincts demanded expression; His dreams demanded realization; His prayers demanded an answer. Never before or since in history had the whole nature of youth been so thoroughly harrowed for the harvest. Jesus was waiting.

In contrast to the romancing of the Apocryphal Gospels about His childhood, with all their unreal and unedifying detail, the canonical Gospels, as everyone knows, are extraordinarily reserved. Such reticence was in keeping with the practice of the early Jewish writers, who, as Klausner says, "were interested in a man's life only after he had appeared on the stage of history." That is the reason why, as we saw in the last chapter, any account of Jesus' early life must be drawn from our general knowledge of the customs and opinions of the

time, and from deductions made from His own later life and character. The childhood of Our Lord is still, and always will be, a field for reverent conjecture. Owing to the tradition of reticence among ancient writers, from Herodotus to St. Paul, the same is true, unfortunately, of much of His mature history. It must always be a matter of amazement to the student and the critic that it was possible for men, who felt themselves to be the chroniclers of a life without parallel in human experience, to write their accounts of it with so little detail and so little attempt after dramatic or literary effect as we find in the pages of the Gospel narratives. In their recitals of even such stupendous happenings as the Transfiguration, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, the description is so matter-of-fact as to be almost commonplace, judged, at least, by the standards of modern biography. Were they blind to the greatness of their theme, those old, reverent writers, or were they dramatically wise with a wisdom beyond their age?

One incident of the childhood years alone is noted, and that only by St. Luke. It is the suggestive and significant account of the visit to the Temple—undoubtedly the most important and far-reaching event in the spiritual life of all that early period. Every word in the familiar narrative is worthy of the closest study. As given in the English Revised Version of St. Luke, 2:41-52, it reads as follows: "And His parents went

every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast; and when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and His parents knew it not; but supposing Him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: and when they found Him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for Him. And it came to pass, after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions: and all that heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. And when they saw Him, they were astonished: and His mother said unto Him, 'Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I sought Thee sorrowing!' And He said unto them, 'How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be in my father's house?' And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He was subject unto them: and His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

This passage of St. Luke is wholly unsupported by the other Gospels, and the student may well ask whether it is not one of those later textual additions which have done so much to confuse the thought and

exegesis of even the most devout scholars of the past. No categorical answer can be given; but categorical answers are seldom as convincing as the response of intuition—that is why the truths in which we believe are more important to us than the truths which are demonstrated—and intuition accepts the story as being, without any question, necessary, and so authentic. Some such experience had to come in time to the future leader of the religious life of His age; and some such experience had to be the touchstone by which He could measure the value of all that had gone before. The atmosphere, the detail, is wholly congruous with all that we could picture. There is no trace of that apologetic effort to explain away difficulties or contradictions, to suggest removal of His limitations, similar to those we find in many later passages of even the first three Gospels; such as the sentence attributed to John the Baptist in the Gospel of St. Matthew, "I need to be baptized of thee, comest thou to me?"—an obviously late attempt to place Jesus and the Baptist in the relationship which later events showed to be appropriate, but which was not apparent or necessary at the time. Modern scholars have brought all the resources of their scholarship to bear upon these words of St. Luke, and almost universally agree that the passage represents so true a tradition that "only upon internal evidence of something wholly inappropriate could it be rejected." Holtzmann says, "The historicity of the fact as a whole

is at least not to be doubted," and Easton, in his commentary on St. Luke, states: "Its general accuracy may be affirmed without hesitation, for later tradition would never have created an account of Christ learning from the scribes."

Even if we had not been told of the visit to Jerusalem we could have deduced the bare fact from our knowledge of Jewish practice. The whole ceremonial occasion is laid down as an obligation for youth by the Talmud with such precision as to imply that, in strict law, personal observance of the ordinances, and hence attendance at the feasts at Jerusalem, devolved upon a boy only when he was of age, that is, at thirteen years. Then he became what was called 'a Son of the Commandment' or 'of the Torah.' But we have every reason to believe, again with the authority of the Talmud, that, as a matter of fact, the legal age was, in this respect, sometimes anticipated by two years, or at least by one. The whole procedure was called the Bar-Mitzvah rite—a kind of spiritual graduation, or, as we might call it in modern terms, the equivalent to Episcopal Confirmation. There is some doubt as to the exact date when this rite became a constitutional part of the Jewish religious observance—whether or not it was so at the time when Jesus was born. But the point seems to be of minor importance. Even if not thoroughly recognized during the early years of our era, it was almost undoubtedly a common practice. It would seem inevitable

that so significant an event as a boy's arrival at manhood should be signalized by some deeply religious occasion; and nothing could be calculated to make a greater impression than a visit to Jerusalem.

Weighing all the evidence it would seem, indeed, hardly to be doubted that the visit took place at approximately the date mentioned by St. Luke. And, quite apart from any historical testimony, it would appear to be almost unbelievable that such a father and mother as Joseph and Mary would fail to seize some early opportunity of taking their children to the Holy of Holies of their religion, the place from which the stream of high aspiration had always flowed, and in which the hopes and fears and prayers and praises of thirty or more generations had been centred. If our estimate of the young Jesus is correct, He would hardly have rested content until He had set His feet upon the "holy hill of Zion."

Beneath the bald simplicity of St. Luke's words there lies, for the boy, the excitement of a great romance. The family of the carpenter did not go alone. The roads were too dangerous, and robbers and wild beasts too attentive for that. The community formed itself into a caravan, and the occasion, for the youthful, took on the air of a solemn picnic, shared in by their kinsfolk and acquaintance. What a stirring was abroad in the village! How carefully were the wagons tightened and the oxen chosen! How much preparation was on

every side of food for the journey, of clothes that would appear the best, of offerings, of gifts for friends and relations in the great city! And, behind it all, how brightly burned the zeal of a spiritual purpose—the light that shines in every pilgrim's eyes when he draws near to the Mecca of his hopes!

Jerusalem was crowded. It has been estimated that, on the occasions of the great feasts and festivals, as many as two million people thronged its inadequate streets. It was a cosmopolitan mob, representative of probably nearly every city and district in the Empire of Rome, for, however scattered the Jewish race might be, Jerusalem was still a magnet that, from time to time, drew all her children to her. But not all had come to worship. There were others, attracted by the thought of pleasure or profit, who followed in the wake of the gathering multitude—traders of all kinds, magicians, confidence men, beggars, women of the streets, actors, musicians. It was then for the first time that Jesus rubbed shoulders with Zacchaeus and Nicodemus and Mary Magdalene, helpless Bartimaeus, the centurion, the young man with great possessions. And some of the things that He heard and saw must have seared His heart as with a flame.

Of course there were poverty and disease and sin in Nazareth; but there they were pitiable accidents, by no means raised to the exaltation of a public menace. There was no similarity between the sights that that

little village afforded, and the spectacle of human depravity and misery that unfolded itself on every side in this great crowded metropolis. What of the line of cripples, stretching along the walls of every courtyard, waiting for someone to do a miracle on them! What of the rows of screaming beggars, some blinded, some with hideous sores, some without arms or legs or noses or ears, all beseeching alms, and clutching at every passer-by! What of the women with strange languorous glances, which they did not hesitate to bestow even upon this handsome boy! Truly there was something here that differed disturbingly from the sublimity of the hills of Galilee, and forced the imagination into channels that had never been navigated in the Synagogue School.

It may well have been that Jesus then, for the first time, became conscious of something that He never failed to drive home in His later years—the need, the vast pathetic need, that gripped humanity for health and happiness and good. To-day we call our answer to that need, which has not, to all appearance, grown less with the passing of the years, by the general name of social service. Spiritual salvation was difficult enough for the normal man—as He well knew from the history of the heroes of His people, and the lessons He had learned in school and at home: how much more difficult—in reality, how impossible was it—for men who started with a handicap of disease or destitution! There-

fore one of the first things to be done was to bring men, as far as possible, to an equal physical level. It was to be assumed that underneath, even in the case of those who seemed to have no thought for anything save bodily relief, there were spiritual possibilities; but they had no chance of expression so long as the physical fetters held them bound. Jesus did not give sight to the blind, make the lame to walk, heal the sick, and give bread to the hungry, merely that they might be relieved from their distress. He did it that the spiritual power might be given a chance. Even the poor had the Gospel preached to them!

So, before they had well passed the gate of the city, came the first great revelation. Wide-eyed, the impressionable boy looked around Him; and not a detail of the scene failed to bite deep into His memory. These people needed a Saviour. When and how would He come?

And then the Temple. It was not the gold and silver and ivory miracle of Solomon, for that had fallen victim to the vengeance of the Babylonians six centuries before, and its glories had been carried away or trodden underfoot. This building, which took the place of the shrine which had been erected by those who had returned from the captivity out of the simple materials that lay ready to their hand in the worn-out soil of Jerusalem, owed its inception to Herod the Great, and was still in process of construction in Jesus' boyhood.

Some of its pillars can still be seen in the Basilica of St. Mark's at Venice, and some of its treasures in the churches of Rome and elsewhere. It was, one can well imagine, a magnificent structure, certainly the most imposing that Jesus had ever seen—more imposing, perhaps, than anything He had ever dreamed of. That He had always invested it with a halo of romance is hardly to be questioned. Whether its grandeur, less barbaric, we may imagine, than that of the temple inspired by King Solomon, but still profoundly impressive, added to or subtracted from His instinct of worship we shall never know. It is not, however, unlikely that it definitely stimulated another great spiritual gift, His religious imagination.

A little boy named Galileo once sat in the cathedral at Pisa. The service was unappealing and his thoughts began to wander. Idly he watched the lamps hanging from the roof on their long chains. They seemed very slowly to be swinging—he was sure they were swinging. Using the beats of his pulse as a timepiece, for he had no watch, he measured the oscillations. And in his mind was born that theory of the movement of the heavenly bodies that was one of his great contributions to the later revolution in scientific certainty. So it may have been with another little boy as He watched the processions of the priests in the Temple at Jerusalem, heard the deep chanting of the choirs, and smelt the incense rising to God from the altar. What

was, in truth, the God who called forth all this devotion? Here was something which had been utterly lacking in the Synagogue service at Nazareth. Here was colour and splendour and light, the dedication of the best that mankind could give as an offering to that invisible Father, in whose name, and under whose direction, this multitude lifted up its eyes and heart. Here was gloriously foreshadowed that spirit of reverence which His future followers found in "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace."

The Jews were instinctive ritualists. Jeremiah conveyed his message by wearing a yoke about his neck, and dashing the earthen vessel to pieces on the ground. Saul rent his clothes, and David threw ashes on his head. So Jesus, through all the later ministry, knew how deeply a concrete symbol may convey a spiritual truth—felt, in fact, that a spiritual experience, almost of necessity, demands material expression. He took it for granted that His understanding was common to all. Hence He did not hesitate, at the end, to entrust His memory to a concrete symbol—His Sacrament. And His life was sacramental, full of meaning to all those with imagination, those who were willing to "see with their eyes and hear with their ears." For that reason He made clay with His spittle in order to touch the blind man's eyes; He wrote with His finger in the dust to show His answer to the sinning woman—that human frailty can be brushed away in a moment; and

girded Himself with a towel to wash the disciples' feet in order that they might see that ministry is not an empty word or a hollow gesture, but a living and purposeful act. He was the greatest ritualist of them all; and it may well be that that first experience of worship in the Temple crystallized in Him forever His instinctive longing for dynamic expression.

And further there was the added significance of the Passover itself, culminating in the Pascal Feast. He saw the Pascal lamb sacrificed, and sat down with His elders to partake of that solemn meal which formed the stirring reminder through all ages of God's choice of Israel for His own, and His care for them, even in those dark days when they were strangers in the land of Egypt. The love of God! Surely that love could not be merely for a nation, in disregard of all those individual faithful souls to whom the nation's welfare had been entrusted! Surely God loved the man Moses, murderer as he may have been; and David, even with the stain of adultery on his conscience; and poor mistaken Saul, though he saw but dimly through deluded eyes! It was a conviction that Jesus carried home from Jerusalem—a conviction that, for Him, God was no longer the leader and lover only of a race, but that He extended His personal, affectionate discipline to every one of the children of men.

George Farnum, in an article on "The Boyhood of Jesus," makes this comment: "At the Pascal Feast it was

customary for the youngest present to ask, 'Why is this night different from other nights?' adding a mention of some of the ritual acts. 'What mean ye by this service?' (Deuteronomy 6:20.) The head of the house replied by a recapitulation of the history of the Exodus." If it fell to Jesus' lot to ask that question, it may well have been that His voice was choked with emotion; for truly, to Him, this night was different from all other nights. The recollections and impressions of all those last crowded hours flooded in upon Him. He had seen the need of humanity and it had gripped Him; He had seen man's earnest, but all inadequate, efforts to interpret the answer to that need, and had heard the assurance that one day it would meet with its fulfillment; He had been present when the people He loved best in the world dedicated themselves again, body and soul, to a personal life of obedience to the will of God, and in the serenity of their faces He had read the story of how intimate and vital the response had been. Religion was nothing formal or academic. It rested on the bond between God and man. It was within, inconsidered, dynamic. He, a boy, had come into the fellowship of those who felt that they were needed, each one, to bear the tidings of salvation to those who waited so patiently. Perhaps, with the sincerity of His overpowering devotion, He would be called to some field of special, even unique, service.

Immediately after Jesus' parents and the rest of the

company from Nazareth had fulfilled their obligations, the caravan started for home. Edersheim says that "only on the first two days of the Feast of the Passover was personal attendance at the Temple necessary." He further notes, quoting the Talmud on the Sanhedrin: "The members of the Temple Sanhedrin were wont on Sabbaths and Feast Days to come out upon the terrace of the Temple, and there to teach. In popular instruction the utmost latitude of questioning would be granted." Here was a chance not to be missed. Joining the throng of those who, partly out of curiosity, partly because they had nothing else to do, and partly because they wanted the further light of knowledge, assembled round the Scribes and Doctors on the terrace, Jesus soon lost all track of time. He was in personal touch now with the spiritual leaders of His race. They could tell Him all that He wanted to know. He could not tear Himself away. Among the personnel of the little procession of ox carts that was beginning slowly to wend its way through the city gates, and out upon the road that led to Galilee, all was confusion. The crowd of travellers, all homeward bound, was tremendous. No wonder that they found it difficult to keep together in their own little company. But nightfall would straighten things out. The leaders would wait for the stragglers, and the camp would find them united. But they reckoned without the unaccountability of genius. The tents were pitched and the roll was called, and Jesus was lost!

Nothing could be done that night; but, in the early morning, Mary and Joseph hurried off to retrace their steps through the maze of traffic that was now against them. No wonder their journey was slow, too slow altogether for their anxious forebodings! But Jerusalem at last! A hurried search through the morgue, the police stations, the doctors' offices—and then, with a sigh of relief, the sudden appearance of the boy among the great men of the Temple staff, "both hearing and asking them questions."

We may ask, with some interest, what there was about His conversation with these learned men so remarkable that, as we are told, the hearers were moved to amazement. It may well have been His deep and genuine knowledge of the Scriptures, showing a love and reverence for them unusual in a boy of His age, or even, for that matter, in a grown man. They were more to Him than the mere curriculum of His education; they were the memorials of His nation's history, and the record of the dealings with men of that same God whose worship He had just seen so wonderfully celebrated. To Jesus the Scriptures always seem to have been the Word of God, and, as such, to be treated with a reverence beyond that given to any other form of literature or study. In addition to this the hearers were probably astonished at His true religious insight. Perhaps even then there was beginning to glow in His mind that quick appreciation of the difference between

false and genuine, between relative standards of value, between the will of God and the way of men, that made Him, in later years, victorious in every argument with those who tried to "catch him in His speech." Nothing is more outstanding in His record than that power of spiritual dialectic which, time after time, "confounded the Scribes," and almost always by resting its argument on some quotation from the ancient writers. It may well be that the doctors in the Temple were hardly prepared to find in a Galilean boy an intuition that cut across all the grain of casuistry to hew out a perfect symbol of truth.

Very naturally, now that their anxiety was miraculously set at rest, His parents spoke in a tone of reprimand. He had been very thoughtless of their peace of mind, and had put them to a vast amount of trouble and distress. His answer to Mary's question is certainly not intended to imply rebuke. It is simply the disclosure of a mind so preoccupied with the thought of the Heavenly Father that, for the moment, other duties and other considerations had become secondary. Surely, He imagined, what was so important to Him would be of equal and obvious importance to others.

Most modern translations of the New Testament, including Moffatt, and, as we have seen, the English Revised Version, give His answer to Mary in some such form as, "Do you not see that I have to be in my Father's house?" instead of the familiar rendering of

the King James' Version, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The discrepancy is immaterial, and the indefiniteness of interpretation helps to emphasize the really important words in the sentence —"My Father's." This was an astounding thing for a boy to say in the presence of His own parents! It represents a further stage in the development of that conviction which, always powerful within Him, had received a seal of definite and conscious acceptance in His mind during this wonderful experience in Jerusalem. He had always known that He was one of the children of God, in common with every other devout Jew. But now another element had forced itself upon Him. Perhaps He stood in some particular and peculiar relationship. Perhaps there was something unique in His Sonship—a thought He expressed so often in later life. If so, then it is a new estimate of sonship which is carried back to Nazareth to be strengthened by the discipline of obedience to His earthly father, to deepen and widen as, "He grew in wisdom and stature." D'Arcy, in his article on "Consciousness" in "The Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels," when dealing with Jesus' answer to His parents on the occasion of this episode in the Temple, puts the thought in these words: "Here is evident the work of the child's imagination, in which the dominant idea controls absolutely everything else, and the most unlikely events appear absolutely natural. 'How is it that ye sought me?' What is ex-

traordinary is the nature of this dominant idea. Already at the age of twelve, Jesus knows God as His Father, and that in a manner so intimate and so peculiar that ordinary human relationships are as nothing in comparison with the relationship to God. The doing of God's will is already the supreme motive. It is to be noted how the 'My Father' contrasts with the 'Thy father' of Mary's question. It is perhaps more natural to regard this as the inevitable reaction in His consciousness than as a deliberate correction of His mother. If so, it is all the more impressive. It shows how fundamental was the position in His mind of the filial relation in which He stood to God."

And so Jesus returned to Nazareth. What new elements of self-knowledge He brought with Him we can only conjecture, but we can be perfectly sure that, among them, were an increased sense of the essential needs of human nature, of misery and penury and unhappiness and frailty and the fight against death; an increased appreciation of the glory of dedicating all earthly beauties to the God who gave them, and the necessity for finding expression for every mood of devotion that swept across the soul; and an increased feeling of the personal contact that exists between God and His sons and daughters. Added to this was something of what Isaiah experienced in the great moment of his commission: "And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I

said, 'Here am I, send me.'" There may have sprung up in Jesus' mind in those amazing hours in Jerusalem the thought that, as God had really shown Himself to Him as Father, there was now a relationship between them that nothing, not even death, could break. And, with this deeper understanding of the meaning of the love of God, a deeper sense of mission grew. Was He, in any capacity, to be the nation's deliverer? Was He to be God's special agent in bringing in the Kingdom? If so, the old question repeated itself, When and How?

No candid biographer of the mind of Christ can avoid asking himself two questions. Why did He stay in Nazareth so long? What happened in the silent interval between the time when He came to Jerusalem at the age of twelve and His first appearance as a teacher and leader of His people, Israel, at about the age of thirty? There are several answers, each charged with something of the truth. It is probable that, before many years passed, Joseph died. That meant that the care and responsibility for the support of the family devolved upon the first-born, and, at least until the other brothers were full grown, Jesus had to work hard. This did not deny Him opportunity for social life, or for what He cared more about—moments, even hours, of meditation, reading, and prayer. But it did deny Him the possibility of surrendering all His time, all His thought and effort, to devotion. And, because of that, Jesus became a man of the world, and not merely a

mystic recluse preaching about a Kingdom of the Spirit that was unintelligible to, and unapproachable for, the busy farmer or the merchant or the slave. Jesus is the world's Saviour because, unlike Gualala, He faced the daily difficulties of a strenuous life, and still stood spiritually victorious.

And He was waiting for a call. It had to be a particular kind of call. What had He heard in Jerusalem, and now, because His ears were more open, even in Nazareth? Mutterings? Rumours of a new and more successful insurrection? But that was not His summons. If God was truly a loving Father He would not bring His family to order by threats of violence. If, for the establishment of the new dispensation, there were need for the sword, then there must be found other leaders than Himself, other teachings, other, and more martial, opportunities. But there was no need for the sword. That was merely a crude instrument that killed the body, and had no effect upon the spirit. He wanted to wait for another sort of opportunity—an opportunity for appealing to the hearts of men when once those hearts had been purged of malice and self-seeking and pride. He was waiting for a spiritual awakening, because only then could His unique talents prove their value.

He waited in Nazareth eighteen years.

CHAPTER III

BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION

It was with this background that Jesus came to the Jordan. About the year A.D. 27 or 28, if we accept the most probable reckoning, John the Baptist began to preach in the wilderness of Judaea. For a while he was little more than a local sensation, but in time reports of his amazing influence began to penetrate even into the remote hills of Galilee, and probably caused particular interest in the household of Joseph. John was within a few months of Jesus' age, and although there is no evidence that John and Jesus ever met, it is not unlikely that John may have visited in Nazareth. If so, what talks these two boys must have had! Different in character and disposition almost as night is different from day, yet they had one compelling bond in the religion that meant so much to both of them. It may well have been that, wandering over the mountains, they exchanged intimacies of their spiritual life, told each other of the dreams and longings that filled each vital moment, and prayed together to that Father God who, they may have felt, had not left Himself without wit-

ness so long as they two were there to be His champions.

When no longer was silence possible, John's message began to thunder out from the valley of the Jordan. It soon arrested the attention even of that careless age; and his meeting place was thronged by the most unlikely and unexpected groups of people. The soldiers came, the tax-collectors, those rich enough to have two coats, those, doubtless, too poor to own one. It was not mere curiosity, for this motley crowd was not content simply to listen to an interesting and stirring sermon. It was so deeply moved that it accepted Baptism, the sign of dedication where there had previously existed no spiritual allegiance, of new consecration where the power of an old fealty had weakened. A new prophet, indeed, had risen in Israel!

It was not so much that what he said had not frequently been said before. The coming of the Kingdom, and hence of the Messiah, was the theme of many contemporary evangelists. But there was a new urgency about this preaching. Repent! Prepare ye the way of the Lord! The Kingdom of God has drawn near! "And even now is the axe also laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." And all flesh should see the Salvation of God! Naturally the fervent and excited crowds began to wonder whether John him-

self might not be the Messiah. But he answered, fiercely and repeatedly, No! One mightier than he was at the door, "Whose fan is in His hand, thoroughly to cleanse His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire." The air was electric with expectation, for there was something different in the appeal of John from anything the people had ever been accustomed to hear. It had nothing to do with a call to arms. It did not incite against Rome, nor extol Judaism. It announced, with the passionate conviction of a fanatic, the one fact that really mattered—the immediate intervention of God in human affairs, the passing of the old spiritual order and the establishment of the new.

In Nazareth Jesus heard John's voice, and recognized its true prophetic quality. Not only was there an imperativeness about it that brooked no denial, but it also sounded that note of social urgency that had always marked out those who were really on fire with the spirit of the Lord. It was long indeed since such a voice had been heard. The Seventy-fourth Psalm, written during the time of the Maccabees, expressed the general despair: "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet; neither is there among us any who knoweth how long." Everything that John said linked itself with all that Jesus had been thinking ever since

that Temple experience—the overwhelming need that humanity felt for something other than the merely material things of life, the urge for a vital personal consecration to the will of God, the pathetic demand for a leader who, like Moses, should lead "those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" out of the spiritual wilderness into the Promised Land. The years of Jesus' preparation were over, and the moment of decision had come. John's preaching was the needed confirmation of His belief that the hour was critical, and seemed to be an answer to His surmise that He had a part to play. Now or never He must ally Himself with the movement which John had precipitated. As to the future—that was in the hands of God! John at least had prevented His remaining forever a religious mystic among the hills.

And so Jesus left Nazareth to go to the Jordan to present Himself for Baptism.

It is with some hesitation that one dares, in His case, to enquire into motive and meaning. And yet, if He is to be, in all ways, pattern and guide for the wandering feet of men, we must make every possible effort to read Him aright. The life of a man is born in his brain. It is true that, as we think, so we are. There is little profit in knowing about a hero's actions unless we also know what made him do as he did. Therefore, faced with this turning point in the journey of the Son of Man, we cannot but ask why, feeling as He certainly did, some

unique relationship with His Father, He felt it needful to submit to human endorsement. Why did He go to be baptized of John?

It cannot be denied that Christian tradition has found it very difficult to account for this action on the part of Jesus: chiefly for two reasons. In the first place it seemed to impute to Jesus a feeling of the need of repentance, for repentance was the necessary antecedent to the Baptist's official reception. And, secondly, it seemed to reverse the proper relationship, for the greater goes to be cleansed by the less. These difficulties were felt even by the Gospel writers themselves, as is shown by the fact that, while the admittedly early tradition of St. Mark, and the incorporated passages of the original source, called by scholars Q, mention the fact only, without explanation or rationalization, St. Matthew, in a passage referred to before, even tries to justify it (St. Matthew, 3:14 and 15). This latter passage is generally accepted as being a much later addition to the Gospel, and shows the effort made by the first century followers of Christ to safeguard every avenue by which His integrity might be attacked. Perhaps Jesus' reason for submitting to, indeed inviting, Baptism will be more distinctly understood if we have clearly before our minds a picture of exactly what John had been trying to do, and what his ceremony of symbolism actually meant.

There is a Rabbinic saying, found in Hieros, Taan

64:1, to the effect that, "If Israel repent but for a single day, the Redeemer will forthwith come." The distinction between that statement and the words of any later or modern reformer is obvious. It is the emphasis on Israel, the nation. There had come a crisis in national affairs. The life of Israel was threatened. What was called for was not the reformation of a few pious souls, but the reconstruction of the spirit of the nation as a whole. This necessitated something more than a temporary and local evangelical mission; it demanded the renewed dedication of every Jew to the will and the purpose of their Father. And renewed dedication meant renewed preparation and moral cleansing. If the Kingdom were really to come with power it must come to men who had made some effort to prepare the way. If judgment were near at hand it must, to be effective, be delivered to those who were conscious that there was something on which judgment should be passed. If God were angry, He was angry with His whole people Israel. John, like Amos of old, tried to make it clear to his hearers that, because they were members of His chosen race, they were not, as some of them seemed to think, exempt from punishment. His Baptism was specifically "unto remission of sins," and that, to a very large extent, meant national sins. There was, for instance, the kind of national pride, criticized afterwards by Jesus Himself, which disregarded the spiritual welfare of everyone who was not a Jew; there was the in-

evitable respect for the sword as the only means of national deliverance; there was the neglect of the true and unblemished law of God as shown in the ecclesiasticism of the national Church; there was also the personal corruption and individual immorality which did so much to weaken the fibre of the whole. Never, it may well be, had any reformer a text and theme of more dramatic and vital importance!

Jesus, whatever His part was going to be in the future establishment of the Kingdom, would assuredly realize that that part must be played in common with, and definitely on behalf of, His people, and not separately. A Saviour comes, not from without, but from within. The young man who had felt it His duty to be in His Father's house would naturally feel it also His duty to take part in any great act of national consecration to that Father's will and purpose. We cannot believe, as we shall see in a later chapter, that Jesus had any conviction of personal sin. At the same time He was a loyal Jew. The sins of His people cried out to God for absolution. He would not be true to all the strength and beauty of His tradition if He refused to identify Himself with an act of national repentance. He would lose infinitely more than He would gain by holding aloof. The call to the Baptism of the Jordan was imperative!

Wide-eyed, expectant, partly apprehensive, He came. Unconscious of the fullness of His destiny, with trem-

bling lips and His heart in His throat, He left Nazareth to sleep in the silence of her hills. What lay before no prophet had ever told Him—but, if what lay before demanded any sacrifice known to man, He was ready to offer it up to that God Who was, He felt, His Father in heaven.

The Baptism was the crisis of His life. St. Mark, the earliest of the Gospel writers, tells of it with that curious detachment we have noticed before: "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon Him: and a voice came out of the heavens, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased.' " The precise phraseology of this early tradition, as preserved in St. Mark and St. Luke, should be carefully weighed, for it differs, in a very important particular, from that of the later tradition as recorded in St. Matthew, and, by implication, in St. John, where John the Baptist is quoted as saying, "Upon whomsoever Thou shalt see the spirit descending, and abiding upon Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." Without prejudice one may say that the earlier tradition, that of St. Mark and St. Luke, is on all grounds to be preferred: and the difference is significant. Did the voice say "Thou art my Son," or

did it merely advertise the fact, "This is my Son," to John, and so, through John, to the world?

We say the earlier tradition, "Thou art my Son," is to be preferred. The divine commission gains so much in dignity and conviction if it is regarded as a proud and loving assurance given only to Him who was particularly and vitally interested. God would have had no need to announce the truth to all mankind. If the Son were really the Son, that fact would become apparent soon enough. And, from another angle, it is not possible to disregard the importance of Jesus' own inner consciousness—that growing feeling of uniqueness, that sense of peculiar Sonship, which lacked until then only expression to become dynamic. The voice at the Baptism was the answer to what, in Him, had been a growing surmise, the clear apprehension of a truth that before was only implicit. The relationship between Father and Son was an intimate and personal relationship, to be recognized and accepted in its fullness by the two parties to the bond before being made patent to the world.

The consecration of Jesus was now complete. The dreams of all those early years, the hopes and doubts that had racked His mind, the inescapable sense that God, in some particular way, belonged to Him and He to God, the infinite undefined implications of Messiahship—all these things had suddenly become transparently clear. At His Baptism Jesus, for better or for

worse, accepted the rôle of Saviour of mankind. Something far more than the mere assurance of Sonship was involved in His experience with John at the Jordan. He is given authority. He is anointed with the Spirit. There is united in Him the triple commission of Call, Authority, and Power. The words of one of His own beloved prophets at last had been fulfilled: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord," or again, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 11:2 and 61:1 and 2).

It does not seem likely that John surely recognized Jesus as the Messiah; in fact it is not impossible, in the light of his question from the dungeon, "Art Thou He that should come?" that John was never quite certain in his mind that the fullness of revelation had come to Jesus. It is easy to see how later writers would have tried to add significance to the Baptism story by making the divinity of Jesus something which no one who was present could possibly have mistaken; but the earlier accounts give no indication of this. There

was nothing untoward or unprecedented in that age about either the vision or the voice, to both of which there are parallels in Hebrew thought. A. E. J. Rawlinson, in his "Gospel according to St. Mark," says, "If a Jewish Christian teacher wished to give vivid expression to the thought that Our Lord, at the moment of His Baptism, received from the heavenly Father a spiritual assurance which made Him finally certain of His Messianic call, the symbolism of Spirit, Dove, and Heavenly Voice would be the natural one for him to use." John believed that one "mightier than he" would come. Was it Jesus or was it not?

In Jesus' own mind there was no longer the slightest doubt or hesitation. Instantaneously His thoughts must have flashed through all the implications of the majestic and awful title, "Son of God." The phrase is used in the Old Testament with various meanings. In one passage or another it is applied to the angels, to men, to the Israelitish nation, to the king—often in a sense which combined the thought of a successful political ruler with the thought of spiritual Messiahship. There was, therefore, no necessary connotation upon which He must immediately seize. And yet, at the Baptism, the phrase had obviously borne a distinctive and special meaning. The words of divine assurance seem to have been combined from two Old Testament passages, that of Psalm 2, verses 6 and 7, "Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee"; and Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." One who applied to Himself these passages, and other similar ones, must definitely have felt Himself to be God's chosen representative. Jesus knew that, in some sense, He was to fulfill the rôle of the Messiah.

It is true to psychology that, when the first moment of exaltation had passed, Jesus should seek retirement in order to think out all that this revelation implied. St. Paul did the same thing after his conversion. Most of us, in moments of spiritual or mental crisis, want to be alone. It is true to experience that convictions should be followed by problems, especially when the convictions are of such magnitude that no man who ever lived could properly measure their vast implications. The convictions centred round the fact that He was the Son of God. A vague and restless suspicion of something of that nature may have played through His fancy in His earlier years. He may from time to time have paused long enough in His carpentry to have worked out a tentative plan of campaign for the souls of men. He may have made mental selection of those upon whom He could count to be His prophets, priests, and pastors. But then He had no certain knowledge. Now the commission had come. The pressing and immediate problem

was—what, as Son of God, was He to do? How was this supreme office to be used? There were no precedents by which to map out a course of action, no examples to use, no footprints in which to follow. This experience of His was unique in the experience of mankind.

As children we read the story of Aladdin's lamp or the ring of Gyges. Sometimes we amused ourselves by wondering what, if, by a mere wish, every secret resource of the universe were at our disposal, we should first demand. Riches? Affection? Admiration? Power? In the thought of Messiahship as mastery of everything in the world, it had always been the latter that shone supreme. The corollary of the Messianic office was Power. All the generally accepted pictures of the Messiah laid emphasis on His authority. It was His function to reign. But, Jesus asked Himself, was there not something more fundamental, more spiritual, than the prevailing conceptions? Did not the idea of authority need revision? Was there not, even within the Old Testament itself, an intimation, a suggestion, of something far more gracious and tender than the kind of Messianic authority anticipated by Jesus' contemporaries—such authority as they would, by weight of popular opinion, force any claimant of the office to exercise? Jesus looked back to the old days in Nazareth—now so very far away. The phrase, "consolation of Israel," so often on the lips of His parents and friends, haunted

Him. Was Israel to be consoled by the trappings of earthly supremacy, by principalities and powers and the authority of high position? All things were possible, but perhaps not all things were expedient. Was the body of a man the first and most important consideration, his comfort, his vanity, even his very existence? Might there not be something more significant, because more everlasting, to be done for a man's soul?

Temptation is common to all men. It was not unnatural or extraordinary, therefore, for Jesus to be tempted; especially now that the climax had been reached. His previous safeguards of uncertainty and privacy had been taken away from Him. He was no longer His own master. He belonged to God and His fellow men. His responsibility was clear cut, but His method of procedure was utterly undefined. Marcus Dodds, in his article on the Temptation, in "The Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels," describes His struggle in these sentences: "The key to the Temptation is found in the necessity laid upon Jesus of definitely determining the principles and methods of the great work that lay before Him. There were necessarily present to His mind as possible courses the various expectations current among the people. Eventually these presented themselves as three great questions. Am I, as Messiah, lifted above human needs and trials? What means may I legitimately use to convince the people of my claims? What kind of Messianic Kingdom and

King am I to represent? To each of these questions there was an answer present to the mind of Our Lord, cherished by most of the people He was sent to influence, and with much which superficially commended it, but which He recognized as Satanic."

In the shape in which it is recorded in the Gospels, the account of the Temptations is certainly allegorical. When He tells the story He uses the parable form which, later on in His ministry, was to be His chief and most persuasive preaching method. The picturesque and familiar narrative summarizes what must have been the main points of His inner conflict in the desert. He uses this popular method of speech to reveal to His friends the spiritual struggle of those forty days. No one was with Him. Naturally many of the followers of John, and His own friends, some of whom must have gathered round Him, were curious to know what had become of the young man who had seemed so powerfully affected by the Baptist's simple rite. When they saw Him again they asked Him; and the moving description of the Temptations is the answer. It may be as well to refresh our memory with the words. There is no reference to the matter in St. John, and only a passing mention in St. Mark. The accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke, the latter of which follows, are very similar: "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted by the

devil. And He did eat nothing in those days: and when they were completed, He hungered. And the devil said unto Him, 'If Thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread.' And Jesus answered unto him, 'It is written, man shall not live by bread alone.' And he led Him up, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, 'To Thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them; for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be Thine!' And Jesus answered and said unto him, 'It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' And he led Him to Jerusalem and set Him on the pinnacle of the Temple, and said unto Him, 'If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, to guard Thee: and on their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest haply Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.' And Jesus answering said unto him, 'It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' "

We cannot fail to see, in all these temptations, an appeal to the exercise of power. This was an appeal entirely justified by popular expectation, and by the record of history—for, as we have seen, the Jews looked forward to earthly domination as being one of the chief marks of the Messianic age—but it was an appeal wholly unjustified in the eyes of one who made God's

universal Fatherhood the spiritual test of religion and of life. Jesus might be beyond the reach of ordinary temptation—for temptations come to people on the level of the life they live—but He could not escape the implication of that supreme authority to which He had suddenly fallen heir. Power, which makes a peculiar appeal to the strong and the imaginative, must provide its own justification through the way in which it is exercised, the purpose to which it is applied. To Him the temptation to abuse it came with particular violence because of His previous inexperience. It was a greatness suddenly thrust upon Him. He had not known the gradual steps that might have prepared Him with a programme that was beyond question.

The first temptation—hunger—touched the whole question of His identification with the human lot. So many people had to know hunger. Was it not well that He should share their suffering and distress? The thought brought the beginning and the end of His ministry strangely together. Human life, on the whole, for the mass of people, is unhappy. It is full of pain and sacrifice and sorrow. Could He really ever know what they were going through, and show them that He knew it, unless His life was the same as theirs? A man falls into a swiftly flowing stream. One who would save him must do more than call directions from the bank. He must go down himself into the water where the drowning person is struggling, and, at the risk of

his own life, drag him forth. So, with Jesus, the temptation was to stand aloof. He was the Messiah. He had power. He could do miracles, which other men could not do. Very easily could He persuade Himself that He must adopt a policy of enlightened selfishness for the sake of His work. He must be well-fed that He may preserve His strength! He must have something of comfort and security that His attention be not diverted from the greatness of His undertaking by unnecessary and annoying trifles! He must build up for Himself a specialized kind of life lest men confuse Him with one of themselves! These were specious arguments. They made Him pause. He stood on the brink of the tragedy that has ruined so many careers, so many ministries—the tragedy of that weakness that demands that others surrender what it refuses to surrender itself. "Physician, heal thyself!" "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

To yield to His hunger would be to give up for His own life what He was most to require in others—dependence on God. To yield was to demonstrate a virtual lack of faith in the Father. If He was to teach that in all things God reigned supreme, master of all the affairs of men, who must learn to trust to Him for everything, how could He not trust Him for His daily bread? There was no doubt about the answer. He must face the need of God in every way as other men faced the need of God, in pain and sorrow and humiliation

turning only to that source from which all blessing and all comfort flow.

What is usually called the second temptation, because it comes in that order in St. Matthew's account, though it stands third in St. Luke's, has a subtle and insidious strength. Where lay the fault in making an immediate effort to catch the attention of those who were to be His disciples? Why not, by one dramatic and spectacular feat, overwhelm their senses, dazzle their imagination, prove that the age of miracles had come again? It may well have seemed to Jesus, with His experience of the little school at Nazareth, the routine of all His previous daily life, the easy fulfillment of the necessary religious duties, the slovenly processes of thought among the country folk with whom He had lived, that the method of appeal to conscience and intelligence and reason was so slow as almost to be hopeless. The time was short. How could conversion come save by some signal act of power? What was the cry He heard on every side? We want a sign! We are not willing to give up our days to a patient search for the truth! We want to have it placed before us in so striking a way that there can be no mistake! Such were the voices that broke in upon Him. In this respect the Jews of Jesus' time bear a strong resemblance to the Christians of to-day. The hold of religion is weak, not because men and women do not want the truth, but because they are too busy or too lazy to go through the

wearisome process of finding it. It has always been hard for the world to understand that there is no easy royal road to the knowledge of the Highest.

And yet, Jesus realized, the manifestation of such a sign would defeat its own object. He was not anxious to capture the attention or the imagination of men; He wanted to be supreme over their wills. A charlatan could seduce, but he could not save. He could gather round him a crowd, openmouthed, wide-eyed with astonishment, but they would leave Him when another magician's circus appeared down the street. The history of His people stretched back over two thousand years. During all that time the Father had been pleading with them, reasoning with them, guiding them, teaching them. The finger of the Lord had never written hurriedly on the cave wall of man's destiny. It had moved slowly, unceasingly, and surely.

To yield to this demand for a sign would be to show a complete lack of hope in the adequacy of the Father's reasonable and spiritual methods to achieve salvation. It would show His utter despair in the possibilities of human character. These men and women around Him, raising their pathetic eyes to His, were all His brothers and sisters, because they were all alike children of God. There must be, in them, the possibility of happiness, of immortal knowledge, of personal fulfillment. So Jesus reasoned. What would He gain by a leap from the Temple roof? What would He lose by waiting and

watching and caring? It was not their immediate homage that He desired, but mastery over their souls. Jesus stands alone among the great leaders of men in His regard for the individual value of each one. A soul is something like a ruby hidden in the sand of a desert. It must be sought for through wearisome nights and adventurous days. To gain it there is travail and danger and hours of blank disappointment. But to him who perseveres it becomes a treasure for evermore. So God had sought His people. So the Messiah must seek His victory.

The third temptation put in its crudest form the thought of the abuse of His supreme power. Once more there arose before His mind the vision of the burdened, the poor, the overtaxed, the downtrodden, the derelicts of Roman domination. How easy would it be for Him to unsheathe the sword, and march to triumph at the head of a shouting host! There was the certainty then that He would command a following. His office gave Him the authority. History supplied Him with the right. Why should He favour methods that were different from those of the warrior-princes of the Old Testament? The call was urgent. Day by day the subjugation of Jewish life grew more pronounced. Day by day the iron hand of the mistress of the world squeezed tighter at the throats of a people that once had been free to chant the praises of liberty. Such a leadership was expected of the promised Messiah. Could He

afford to disappoint these cherished hopes of His nation, and help the hold of Rome by refusing to hinder it?

But, as He pondered, more and more clear grew the conviction that the Kingdom of God was not of this world. Granted that they obeyed His call to arms, and victory rested on His banner, what would He have achieved? Nothing but to exchange the rule of experience for that of inexperience. Nothing but to release His people from one slavery and plunge them into another. There is no real freedom known to man save the freedom of mind and soul and conscience. Unless He could dictate to them the values of life it mattered not that He could give them the liberties of life. Force is not freedom, even to those in whose hands the force lies.

He looked up once more into His Father's face. He saw no compulsion there—rather the tenderness of an all-conquering love. But it was love not so much for the bodies of men as for their undying souls. And He had been tempted to take the easiest road—to assume a mastery of hands and feet, which any Augustus Caesar might do, and relinquish His claim to that element in humanity which could be touched and captivated by God alone! Anyone can gain control over a servant's actions, but not everyone can command his loyalty. How nearly had He come to compromising His conviction that, of all things, the Father's love was the greatest

good! Behind Him He put this third test of His spiritual wisdom. Faith, Hope, Love—all had been tried in the balance, and He had not failed.

His decision was reached. The exercise of His office must be controlled by His experience of God as Father. Every problem, throughout His ministry, must be referred at last to His perceived mind. Those of us to-day, each in our own small ministry, might well profit by the lesson. A temptation can always be resolved into right and wrong if we stand it against the background of the mind of God, revealed to us in the later ages by the mind of Christ. He reasoned with Himself that expediency must not weigh, popular expectation and desire must not control. Everything must be made subject to the thought of the Father's higher will and purpose. So with us. The living of a life that is right before God means the reference of everything in it to what we know His law to be. Personal considerations are as nothing when compared with the majesty of the life of God.

With the decision came peace. "Angels came and ministered unto Him." It was not the peace of inaction, but the peace of an all consuming purpose. There is no peace in this world comparable with that which comes to a man who, having made up his mind, moves unfalteringly to his goal. Angels did not anoint Him to a life of rest and complacency; rather did they minister unto Him as one ministers to a hero who is starting out

upon a forlorn hope. But His way was sure; for, before His eyes, there shone one beacon, and one beacon only—to do the will of His Father who was in heaven, and, forsaking all else, to make Him supreme in the spiritual life of men.

CHAPTER IV

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

JESUS returned from the desert on fire with the consciousness of an old vision living afresh in a new light. The Kingdom of God had always been a picture dimly seen in the shadows of His thought. Now it was the one central masterpiece around which all the other realities of religion grouped themselves, only that they might do it honour by showing it in its true colours. The prophets—Amos, Daniel, Enoch—had visualized the glory of the Kingdom of God as it would stand revealed in the fullness of time. But, as for the practical matter of making it a reality in their own days, they lacked leadership, opportunity, the genius, perhaps, of imagination. They never wavered, we may well believe, in their faith that, to their children's children in generations unknown, the future would be all that they could desire. But the time was not yet. To Jesus, however, alive with the new spiritual insight which silent communion with the Father had given Him, it was an imminent crisis. The ages of promise had run their course. The fulfillment was at hand. There were certain conditions to be observed, conditions that spoke

of a transformation in human thought and conduct, conditions that depended for the validity of their outcome on repentance, a new mind, a more complete understanding of the relation between God and men; but, to the recreating enthusiasm of Jesus, such considerations seemed to present no obstacle. There can be no doubt but that He entered upon His ministry with hopes that knew no hint of failure. Though the Baptist might be pessimistic about the power or willingness of men to change from worse to better, there was no pessimism in Jesus. The Kingdom of Heaven was immediate. Anyone who understood the purport of that message would hasten, arms outstretched, to realize its treasures.

Therefore into the expression of His conception of the Kingdom of God and its bearing on the lives of men, Jesus pours forth the full power of His eloquence. And, at least in the beginning, He does so without any attempt explicitly to define what the Kingdom was or what constituted the principles of its sovereignty. He seems to take it for granted that the meaning of the phrase was universally intelligible and generally understood. He evidently conceived of His mission as one of exhortation, not of explanation. He was sent to challenge inattention and indifference. He was to goad men into an effort to make the Kingdom into a reality both for personal and public good. He felt that men must certainly love the highest when they see it. There-

fore He must remove from the range of their sight, as far as He could, the earthly obstructions of money, self-aggrandisement, private vengeance, jealousy, which caused their preoccupation, so that their eyes might be clear to behold the prize that was not unknown but unremembered. He was not so much a teacher as a prophet.

With what fervour He applied Himself to this task is apparent even to the most careless student of the Gospels. His burning, zealous words of admonition are among the most compelling that He ever spoke. The conquest of the Kingdom is to stand first in men's thoughts and desires—"Seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). They are to pray "Thy Kingdom come." They are to hold it as the justification and reward of every sacrifice, the pearl of great price which must be purchased even if that means the surrender of all else that a man has. They are to regard it as the supreme happiness, in the light of which poverty and pain and oppression lose their bitterness. And, when once that Kingdom is gained, the reward is surpassing—nothing less than the attainment of the highest possible place in the favour of God, above even the greatest prophets: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet He that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11).

As the men and women of those days were not very different, in primary characteristics, from the men and women of to-day, it is not to be wondered at that Jesus' preaching did not make, at first, any universal impression. Exhortation is, at best, a slow instrument of conversion. And moreover Jesus' apprehension of the truths that He was emphasizing was intuitive. To Him they were fundamentally obvious. The Kingdom of God is His theme. The Kingdom comes when and where God is sovereign, God is all in all. To Him God was all in all. But this held good of only a small portion of His hearers. The majority were obsessed with the practical difficulties of daily living. Sometimes, perhaps, He paused in His efforts and asked Himself hard questions. Why did the mass of the people not respond more readily? Why were there not more instances of a spiritual awakening? It was true that people seemed to like to hear Him talk, but how few altered their method of life to show that they were really in earnest in setting out upon the long road that led to the Kingdom! Andrew perhaps, and a few others. Peter came to please his brother. James and John, it may be, because of an expectation—false though it proved to be—that there might be something of material profit to be gained by discipleship. Matthew because of an intense and overmastering personal appeal. We all know how difficult it is to communicate what we ourselves feel of reality. It is as portentous a task as to interpret to others the

spiritual values we find in a sunset or a symphony. And yet Jesus had to make the effort. He played upon the idea of the Kingdom as a master organist might play upon a heavenly instrument. He poured out in its service words that, for force and beauty, have never been paralleled either by seer or poet. He ransacked the humble lives of His audience for illustrations that might find a lasting and persuasive foothold in their imagination—the similes of the dragnet, the leaven, the mustard seed, the treasure hidden in the field. He approached the thought of the Kingdom of Heaven with every artifice, and from every angle, to make His hearers respond; but still too many remained obdurate. They did not seem to take His message as seriously as they took His more practical gifts of healing. They wanted, not a speech, but a sign.

In all figures or similes there is, necessarily, something inadequate. They allow too much room in which the imagination of the hearer may work, so that the margin of possible error as regards the real meaning of the point at issue is immeasurably increased. This is essentially true of the parables of Our Lord. Vitally suggestive they are, but they will not yield their inner meaning unless and until the disciple comes into correspondence with Jesus' thought and feeling about God. So much He seems Himself to have perceived—"Hearing they shall not understand."

What made Jesus' attempted task of interpretation

all the harder was the fact that in contemporary thought there was no one definite doctrine of the Kingdom, but rather many systems of thought with many features in common, but possessing a great divergence in detail. The fundamental idea was the result of a long and varied history, which allowed plenty of room for different strands of interpretation, and, in fact, made it necessary that such should exist. Expressed very briefly, the common denominator, if there was one, was the expectancy of a state in which God's sovereignty would be fully recognized in the lives of men, when God's promises to the nation, as echoed in the prophets, would be completely fulfilled, when God's will would be so perfectly carried out that there would be nothing to stand in opposition, and, as a result, peace and happiness and righteousness would be the portion of mankind. In broad outline these ideals were at the basis of Jesus' thought and preaching. And yet there were very prominently, in His teaching, two somewhat divergent outlooks upon the idea of the Kingdom which are best understood in the light of their past history.

In the first place, whatever might have been the origin of the idea of the Kingdom of God—perhaps a mere primitive myth of the golden age, which must have existed in retrospect if not in fact, since nations, like men, have an inveterate tendency to idealize the past—the firm basis in Hebrew thought is the consciousness of a direct and definite relationship with God in terms of

an everlasting covenant. The promise thunders from the wilderness of Sinai—"Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be of a peculiar treasure unto me from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine" (Ex. 19:5), and echoes through the writings of the prophets—"Obey my voice, and do according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; that I may establish the oath which I sware unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day" (Jer. 11:4 and 5). These promises, explicit in the gradual revelation of the Old Testament, implied on the people's part a dedication of their loyalty and service: on God's part the fulfillment and reward were to be the blessings of peace, prosperity and security.

Historically this relationship was never fully consummated. The blessings of peace, prosperity and security were far from ever being realized; and it cannot be doubted, from even a slight knowledge of the temper of God's people, Israel, but that they never made any real effort, nationally, to carry out their side of the contract. A concerted and protracted endeavour to show God an honest enthusiasm for loyalty and service in His honour is nowhere suggested in the ancient writings. The contract was of none effect. The party of the first part refused to fulfill the terms of the covenant; therefore, with all justice, the party of the second part

refused all privileges. The Jews, as some of them realized in all probability, had no one to blame but themselves.

Whatever may have been the reason for the failures of the men of the past, the men of the present had to make up their minds as to the most serviceable philosophy for the future. They could either doubt God, and treat His seeming promises as so many hallucinations nourished in the teeming, diseased brains of preacher and prophet, or they could retain their confidence in the authenticity of their historical claims, and look for fulfillment in days to come. Hope is hard to kill. Helpless atheism lay before them, or humble and watchful waiting. Their portion was one or the other. And they chose to wait; and some chose to watch; and a few chose to pray.

Thus arose the characteristic attitude of expectation so prominent in the later writings of Israel. It was a significant factor in her history and development. Without it, it might well have been that the nation would have disintegrated. What held it together, through the troublous centuries from the time of the captivity to the coming of Jesus, was not a common speech, nor a corporate national life—this she did not enjoy—nor the sense of a great commission; it was a Religion. And the predominant note in that Religion, especially during those years of stress, was the earnest looking forward to the day when God would vindicate Himself as their

friend, protector, and father, before the eyes of all the world. As to the method of this vindication, and the manner of preparation for their share in it, their leaders did not always agree. The details of the catastrophe were, as was natural, vague and diffuse. But as to the main event there was no dispute. Their varying guesses crystallized into the overpowering thought of the Day of Jahveh, the great crisis of judgment upon the nations of the world when, ranged before the majesty of perfect justice, each would have to render account for the faith that was in them, and stand ready to give or receive satisfaction for merit or delinquency. Beyond that Day lay for Israel, and for Israel alone, the consummation of its every striving—that era of happiness and prosperity and peace, later to be known as the Kingdom of God.

Have you ever lived in the constant light of a great expectation? If so, what did you expect? Was it love, and the opportunity for service, and the realization of the soul's immensity as it drew near enough to catch something of the immensity of God; or was it riches and success and favour and the treasures of eye and hand? Only a few, in any age, can dream the dreams of a mystic; the great mass of men and women can cast their eyes no further than the nearest satisfaction. The Jewish people were not spiritually unique. They were made of human clay like the rest of us. Small wonder is it, therefore, that the vision of material blessings

loomed engrossingly before the eyes of all save the few who understood that God, and God's ways, must be spiritually discerned. The Kingdom of God, in the imagination of most Jews, from the time of the early prophets downwards, had become synonymous with a day of almost martial triumph, when the victors entered into the vineyards and homes of the vanquished; when an Israelite, just because he was an Israelite and God loved him more than others, lived and slept in security and abundance, and his nation's enemies were bowing with their necks in the dust of defeat. We should not criticize them, for most of us can understand!

Such a point of view did not go unchallenged. From the year 750 B.C. or even earlier, there were great preachers and prophets, like Amos, who never wearied in their insistence that the Day of Jahveh was not a day that merely inaugurated a period of selfish indolence for Israel. Rather was it a day of severe moral judgment: "Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord! Wherefore would ye have the day of the Lord? It is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? Even very dark and no brightness in it?" (Amos 5:18-20). The high moral indignation of these leaders found an echo in almost all the most persuasive literature of Israel, as in Psalm 51, "a broken and a contrite heart, O God,

Thou wilt not despise." But to little avail. The selfish and exclusive nationalistic attitude persisted, and became one of the counts in John the Baptist's indictment of his generation—"He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of those stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Luke 3:7 and 8). There was to be no certainty of salvation for a Jew just because he was a Jew.

In later prophetic thought the emphasis changed. The materialism of an adolescent people began to be tinged with the idealism of maturity, at least in the teaching of the great religious leaders of the race. How far this new and compelling stress on the need for a moral and spiritual conception of the Kingdom sank into the consciousness of the mass of the people can only be a matter of conjecture. But they must have been deaf and callous indeed if they failed, at least now and then, to give ear to the sweetness and tenderness with which their prophets sketched the beauty of that peace of soul which came to him who followed the righteousness ordained from on high, or refused to be touched by the thought of the almost visible presence of God among His people. How gentle, for instance, are the words, "He hath swallowed up death forever: and the

Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces: and the reproach of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it" (Is. 25:8), or the promise of the Deutero-Isaiah, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that give suck" (Is. 40:11), or the comforting thought of Jeremiah, "At that time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:1). To one who gave heed to such preaching as this the expectation of material reward must have seemed a very unsatisfying incentive, when the favour of God, the peace that passes all understanding, the sympathy of a Father's love, were weighed in the balance against it.

Before passing on to the further, and much later, conception of the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament, and other Jewish thought, it would be profitable, by way of summary, to note two very important facts which are implicit in all the older teaching—which, in fact, are the keynote of the older teaching. They are not entirely superseded by what came afterwards, as is shown by repeated references to them in the New Testament; but, as the ages went on, they do seem to have lost something of their original and historical importance.

Firstly—the outlook is corporate and nationalistic.

God's covenant is with the people as a whole, not with individuals. The individual, in fact, plays no part in the establishment of the expected Kingdom unless he should happen to be alive at the time of its inauguration. This point of view involved at least one, to us, amazing consequence. So long as it obtained, it is obvious that thought could not rise to the concept of personal immortality. The individual simply did not count. A student may wonder at the lack of teaching on this subject in the pages of the Old Testament. But the omission is easily understood. The sense of individual personality and responsibility was practically never strong enough to justify any idea of individual immortality. The race would survive, and go on to the consummation ordained by God. The individual—who was he save the leaf that died in order that the tree might live?

Secondly—the Kingdom that is to be, is, in a sense, an outcome of conditions that have been in the past. It is to be, in part, the development, the outgrowth, of the unknown from the known. It is not to be what we shall see emphasized in the thought of the last two hundred years before Christ—a sudden catastrophic change. Certain individuals, linking life with life from past to future, will be the agents through which, under God, it is brought into being. The very land itself is being prepared, and the New Jerusalem one day will

spring up upon the soil of Palestine, which prophet, priest, and king had watered with their tears and often cemented with their blood.

The Kingdom of God! It is a conception difficult enough even for us in these spiritually mature ages: what must it have meant to those who rested, untutored and inexperienced, in the cradle of history? Can we blame a Hebrew peasant, his whole life and that of his family conditioned by the sequence of seed time and harvest, for seeing the realization of all his dreams in a land flowing with milk and honey; or a wearied warrior, tired of leading his armies against nations that seemed always destined to have the upper hand, for picturing salvation as the cessation of warfare, and the triumph of that nation which went forth in the name of the Lord God; or a discouraged preacher, conscious of the fact that his exhortations fell on deaf ears, for sinking his individual hopes in the future welfare of the race? The ancient Israelite erred, but there is abundant excuse for every mistake he made.

At a time roughly two centuries before Jesus, an expectation of a totally different type arose, not to supplant, but to run parallel with the old, and, within certain limits, to affect it. This is the teaching of the Kingdom of God as expressed especially in the Book of Daniel, to which we can assign a date of not earlier than 175 B.C. Into this vision there creeps a new and vivid element—the conception of catastrophe, of a sud-

den vital change that would profoundly affect man's view of life for the present and his hope for the future. To a certain extent this development was inevitable. Nothing but despair seemed to characterize the older dispensation. It was useless for isolated voices, here and there, to point, however eloquently and vehemently, to a change from misery to happiness, from defeat to victory, in which man would play some significant part. That present or past conditions had in them the seed of future perfection there was no sign. Rather would the history of the race seem to indicate that they were going from bad to worse. The prophecies of peace and security had gone astray too often to warrant any hope for a future felicity. Instead of the freedom so frequently promised, Israel had known no better portion than that of subjection to one power after another. Tyranny was never far from her cities, warfare was never far from her camps, hunger was never far from her hamlets; and, as far as the eye could reach, there was no sign that it could be otherwise. The world was under the power, not of good, but of evil. The Kingdom of Heaven—that could not be a lie in the mouth of God! But its coming depended on strength, and the race was too weak ever to bring it to the birth.

Therefore, into their imagination crept the concept of the Kingdom as derived from one unique and surpassing act of God. It was to be a new creation, sepa-

rated and distinct, by divine fiat, from all that had ever gone before. If God had made man, suddenly and spontaneously, from the dust of the earth, it could not be impossible for God to give him a rebirth, to raise him from the mire of misery into which he had fallen, and set him on those high places reserved through all time for the creatures whom He had made in His own image.

As a sign post between these two ages stands the great and terrible Day of the Lord, separating the days of tribulation that had been from the days of happiness that were to come; and the later prophets give full measure to this sense of contrast. However hopeless might seem the promise of the present, yet God would intervene. He would not expect figs to grow from brambles. He would completely cut away the past and establish a discontinuous order—a divine creation for which men must prepare, but for which, likewise, they must wait. The character of this coming dispensation is supernatural; that is to say, it is different from anything that had ever been before. It is transcendental; that is to say it draws more from the colour of heaven than of earth. And its nature, being other-worldly, and unsuited to the categories of ordinary human knowledge, can be known only by revelation—apocalypsis. Hence the door is open to the new method of thought and speech—matching the new concept of the imagination —to which scholars of recent years have given the title "apocalyptic." It fed, if it did not satisfy, the spiritual

appetite of the Jew for the two centuries preceding Christ; and it left an imprint on the thought of His time, the depth of which can, with a certain amount of readiness, be gauged by the continual references to it we find in the Gospels.

Again, we must not look for any consistent body of apocalyptic teaching. Men pictured the consummation of the future in different ways to match their own sense of need. But, running through the general fabric of prophecy and preaching, there are two significant threads, two common factors that should be noted. They could, without much difficulty, be deduced from what has already been said.

The first, as might have been expected, was the insistence on the importance of the future. This might seem to be a need so obvious as scarcely to merit mention. And yet, how few men really allow the future to colour the present! It is shadowy and unreal, whereas the present is vital and possessive. It depends on persons and circumstances beyond oneself, whereas in the present a man is master of his destiny. But the teaching is very definite. The world to-day is under the dominion of evil—"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31). Hence there is, there must be, a despair of the existing order. But the despair is not ultimate and final. The evil will run its allotted course, and, when it does, God will establish the new heavenly order. He will be

Judge, Leader, and King. As Jesus lifted up His eyes beyond the horizon of the circumstances that pressed about Him, and saw afar off the beauty of the will of God established in human life, so He hoped that it might be for every son of the Father. They too must learn to look forward to the day when the hills would be levelled, and the sunrise find its way unchecked even into the lowest valley.

The second common factor was fraught with infinitely more importance to the spiritual life of men. It was nothing less than the inevitable rise to the surface of the thought of immortality, in a personal, and not merely a national, sense. Now that the Kingdom of God was coming to be looked upon as something different from an extension of the life of Israel in terms of years and centuries and dynasties, and was taking upon itself the colour of a divine and supernatural consummation of God's plan for the world, the individual began to ask whether there might not be room for him in the new dispensation. If his life was no longer simply of value that the race might be preserved, it must arrogate to itself some other value: for it were impossible to suppose that God had allowed the creation of life which had no value whatever. Perhaps there were rays from the eternal even now shedding their lustre on that span of existence which seemed but to bridge the space between the cradle and the grave.

The apocalyptic books are pervaded with this con-

ception: but, long before they were written, there are a few indications in the recognized prophets of the Old Testament that the orthodox view of individuality—as something of merely racial importance—would not provide permanent satisfaction for the forward-looking souls of men. The idea of a beginning and an ending of human striving in nothing more than corporate responsibility was challenged by Jeremiah and Ezekiel—"In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge" (Jer. 31:29-30), and, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4).

It was but a short step from this conception—and one cannot stress too emphatically what a novel contribution to Hebrew thought it represented—to the further conception that, as the human soul had an importance all its own, so it must have time and opportunity fully to realize that importance. And this thought became especially cogent to those who tried to work out any solution for what the world has agreed to call the problem of evil. It is the acuteness with which the sin and suffering and poverty and despair of human living is felt that makes future life for the individual a necessary hypothesis; for, if God is just, as the teaching

of all the ages has been unanimous in certifying, and still keeps control of the main currents of human destiny, He utterly fails to vindicate or evidence that justice if the righteous individual falls, forever crushed by the evil of the world. There must be time and opportunity for the balance somehow to be struck. It could be the only possible answer to the cry of the Psalmist who felt that he might as well eat, drink, and be merry, since the righteous fell from one misfortune into another, while the wicked flourished in such prosperity. It is a cry not unknown to-day, when those who have no fear of God before their eyes so often gather unto themselves the prizes of the world, and the tender and loving-hearted drink the dregs of sickness and failure. There must, the conscience of the world repeats, be time and opportunity for the balance to be struck. And what can that mean but immortality? God is discovered as morally indifferent, and, therefore, as something less than God, if good and evil, righteousness and frowardness, come to the same end. There is no more beautiful expression of the conviction that this cannot be so, in all the apocalyptic books, than the following passage from Daniel, one of the few certain passages in the Old Testament bearing on the inevitable promise of the future life: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firma-

ment; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:2-3).

Such, at least in outline, is the history of the idea of the Kingdom of God in Old Testament and later pre-Christian thought. Like a star that guides a mariner in difficult seas, so its light had been the beacon of peasant, priest, and prophet. But the development of the thought does not stop there. The master alchemist took over its elements, and from their priceless worth forged another and a surer prize. Something was said about the general teaching of Jesus at the beginning of this chapter: it is necessary now to be more specific, and enquire exactly how the conception of the Kingdom of God affected His thought. It must be assumed that He was entirely familiar with the main lines of development traced in the foregoing pages.

For Jesus the Kingdom of God would come—or better, perhaps, would be apparent—when the grip of evil upon the world should be broken: "And He said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you. Howbeit in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:18, 20), and again: "If I by the finger of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you" (Luke 11:20). Sin and suffering

one day should come to an end, and man would be free to follow God in joy and righteousness. It must not be thought, for a moment, that Jesus' thought was always consistent. He had His moods, as have other men. One wonders that He did not, at times, give way to what His brothers and sisters know as despair. But of that there is no suggestion in the Gospel. In fact, it is a curious characteristic of His people that, just when, judging by every human consideration, they ought to be on the verge of despair, they always put it from them. The great convictions of Israel are born in the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus, of all men, showed His power of resolution. There was, no doubt, for Him a profound and increasing thoughtfulness, and a growing certainty that it must be God or nothing. This would constitute despair of any easy religion, of any perfunctory effort to present it—but not of the final issue. We can see in the Gospel that Jesus felt very keenly the stark facts that arrayed themselves against the realization of His immediate hope, and the profound sense that life was a mysterious and solemn affair. Every day the road to the Cross was becoming clearer.

But here we must ask, was the Kingdom, to the thought of Jesus, something after the prophetic pattern, realizable on earth and in the ages of history? Was it, in other words, a present possibility, capable of achievement if only men would give up their habitual evil courses, and try to live a new life? Was it a matter of

individual character and conduct, a reformation in manners and morals, such as might be brought about by any prophet whose words carried complete conviction, who had the power of conversion, and an influence majestic enough to reach to the ends of the world? Or, to put the other alternative, did Jesus think with the Apocalyptists that the present age must pass, and the Kingdom, when it came, be an other-worldly dispensation? Did He at any time believe that His own power could, in His own generation, revolutionize the parlous state of the world; or must the Kingdom lie in an indefinite future, and be initiated by a unique act of God? The answer to these questions is important, especially as throwing light upon His evaluation of Himself and His mission.

The impression that the Gospels give is that Jesus conceived of the Kingdom of Heaven as a good lying in the future. There would be a crisis of divine judgment, and then the new age would be inaugurated by God. It was, to that extent, an other-worldly, transcendental consummation. But, lest they be entirely bewildered, Jesus made it plain to His followers that there was one significant connecting link between the present and the future—and that lay in Himself. To them there was nothing strange about this. The whole content of that early Christian thought and belief lay entirely in the personality of Jesus. He was the explanation of everything, the reason of everything. For in-

stance, they believed in Jesus, not, as some say, on account of the miracles, but they believed in the miracles on account of Jesus. Without Him, and what He represented, the Kingdom of God would be empty of all meaning. He had become, to those who loved Him, the interpretation of every factor in the spiritual equation.

And so, while He rebuked their impatience, He linked the coming of the Kingdom unequivocally with His own presence. It might not necessitate a continuation of His present life on earth—although that is the way in which some of them interpreted His words—it might well be that He would withdraw Himself for a time, and then return. It is strange that those who listened to Him were so slow to learn this lesson, for it could not have been expressed more clearly than it was. In the parable of the ten virgins He obviously identifies Himself with the bridegroom: "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25:13), and a few verses later on He uses the title, Son of Man, which so jealously He kept for Himself: also, "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:12). And so with the great substance of His teaching. He and the Kingdom of God were unintelligible and unrealizable without each other. And He seemed to think that this identification would be made and accepted within the space of a comparatively short period of time: "And

He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There be some here that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). In this expectation, if these words are to be taken as meaning the final consummation of the Kingdom in His own generation, as the event proved, He was mistaken. But that does not invalidate the major claim. Even the Christians of to-day, if they still believe in any future fulfillment to which the term, "the coming of the Kingdom," legitimately applies, would find it hard to disconnect that majesty from the personal presence and work of Jesus Christ.

But, when we say this, we must not fail to emphasize once more how definitely the sense of a new order entered into Jesus' thought of the Kingdom of God. Professor Burton Scott Easton, in his valuable book, "Christ in the Gospels," summarizes the conception as follows—"Jesus used the Kingdom of God, not as a new creation of His own, but as a term perfectly familiar to His hearers, as something that every school child could define. Therefore, except in so far as He explicitly and unambiguously modifies the definition, we may assume that He and His hearers used the words in the same sense. Now the Jewish sense of the Kingdom of God"—we must assume that Professor Easton refers to the Jewish thinkers of Christ's own day—"is not open to doubt: it describes the purely supernatural state of affairs when God, and God alone, shall rule

over men: hence, we may be pardoned if we repeat that, when the Kingdom is inaugurated, human history ceases: the new age is almost everything rather than the result of evolutionary progress" (*Op. cit.,* 159-160). It is enlightening to know how modern science steps in to add credence to such words as these. Sir John Jeans, Sir Arthur Eddington and others, are working on a line of speculation which may render the thought of "evolutionary progress" entirely unnecessary as an explanation of development. According to the new quantum theory in physical science, progress is achieved by a process, as it were, of unexplained and uncaused leaps. The past is no criterion of the future. Causality is a useful symbol, not a fact. And if such may be true in the concrete realm of science, how much more naturally may it be true in the less defined sphere of the spirit. The coming of the Kingdom of God may not be conditioned by any existing order: it may, without doing violence to any system of thought, be an entirely new and causeless manifestation of the power of God. We cannot, in the interests of understanding, avoid the sense of cataclysm. Even C. G. Montefiore, a devout and noted Jewish writer, is sufficiently in touch with the mind of Christ to say that Jesus said and believed that the Kingdom of God was at hand, which meant, with much else, a winding up of the present age—a great change (quoted by Walker, "Jewish Views on Jesus," pages 50-51).

Yet, when all this is said, it cannot be denied that there is much in the teaching of Jesus which does regard the Kingdom as something already present and experienced, though in a form that is merely a foreshadowing of something else—"on the earth the broken arcs, in the heaven the perfect round." Obviously, since the other transcendental, supernatural aspect is in control, the present earthly order cannot be complete, or even approximate completion. But the eternal and spiritual is able to cast its saving light upon the temporal and natural. In fact, in numberless individual lives, it actually does. It is not impossible for men to live *sub specie aeternitatis;* and a life so lived is the only one that has in it true and lasting value. The things of Heaven can never pass away; evanescence is reserved for the things of earth. The Kingdom of God, transcendental and other-worldly though it may be, can come, in part at least, within the compass of human life, here and now, whenever and wherever that human life tries to carry out the principle that is the charter of the Kingdom—the will of God. Men may be treated by promise as Sons of the Kingdom, and feel something of its power and joy; in the same way, but with infinitely greater vividness, as the prisoners, in Plato's great simile of the Cave, knew and enjoyed something of the outside world from the shadows of the passers-by cast at the wall upon which they spent their time in gazing. The Kingdom can be appreciated and approached,

even if it cannot be realized, in the ordinary daily routine of human life.

This thought makes clear in many ways some of the difficult dark places in the ethical teaching of Jesus. His was in no sense merely an ad interim ethic—merely a scheme of good living which would serve to tide over the time until the new revelation was made and the new order inaugurated. It was quite definitely a permanent ethic, intended for those whom He felt to be already within the outside confines of the Kingdom—those, therefore, who, for that reason, would have the power to live as those in the world could not. He was not so misguided an optimist as to suppose for a moment that it held any universal appeal. He frequently implied that only a very few, the elect, could understand what He had to say, and still fewer could put it into practice. But some there were who, in the throbbing stress of daily living, could feel the Kingdom of God among them. And it was to them that the promise and hope of His life was dedicated.

The most solemn thought that lies behind all that has been said is the thought of the meaning, if any, of the Kingdom of Heaven for us to-day. There has been no Second Coming. There has been no cataclysmic change in the complexion of human life. There has been no inauguration of such a Golden Age of the spirit as that to which the prophecies of Israel, and the words of Jesus, seem to point. The Jews, perhaps, as a nation, are

worse off than they ever were; and justice and self-sacrifice and righteousness are by no means the hallmarks of our life together. And yet, if Jesus is not to be considered a blind leader of the blind, the Kingdom of God must be a reality, whether in 1934 or 9034. What value has the thought to you and me personally? Do we believe that it will come, as a transcendental, other-worldly order for the world? A good deal of the happiness of ourselves and humanity depends upon our answer.

Our Lord was the first convincing teacher to make it apparent that the only values that can ensure a present state compatible with the will of God are those eternal values that find their fulfillment in the Kingdom of God hereafter. That is to say, there are certain permanent treasures in human character. They are those treasures which draw their worth, not from momentary expediency, not from good taste, not from self-interest, but from the inalienable conviction that they are the types of something which God, in His omniscience, finds valuable. What, therefore, makes an earthly kingdom or a single human life worth while is that it has something transcendental in its background. The Kingdom of God may never come "by observation," but it is helped into spiritual existence by every thought and word and deed that is dictated by the word of God, and, for its consummation, depends on resources beyond our present comprehension. Anyone who has ever

really prayed will readily understand what this means, and anyone who has ever really loved unselfishly may be forgiven for believing that the Kingdom of God has come already. We must try to become as little children, whose sense of earthly values is untutored, and who, therefore, can give the greater eagerness and the greater receptiveness to the rewards that God offers to those who love His Kingdom.

CHAPTER V

THE SON OF MAN

We have tried to analyse some of the different strands of thought that went into the making of the conception of the Kingdom of God, both in Hebrew literature and among the contemporary theologians of Our Lord's own day; and we have seen how Jesus began His ministry by emphasizing its meaning and importance. But there is a further very significant question to be considered, which was only touched upon briefly in the last chapter—the question of Our Lord's own conscious relationship with that Kingdom. It is not irreverent to make an attempt to search His mind in this connection any more than it is irreverent to make an effort to read God's mind in explanation of the courses of nature. We want to discover, if we can, what, in this regard, He thought of Himself—whether He felt that His life and personality were essential to the coming of the Kingdom; and whether, in any way, He believed that His presence and teaching helped, beyond that of any other man, to determine its nature and significance. To make any headway in this adven-

ture we must, once more, refer to some aspects of ancient thought.

In many strains of Hebrew-Jewish thinking the conception of the Kingdom of God is exemplified in an individual. This individual was known as the Messiah. But there is a great deal about the term, in its many uses, that is baffling and elusive. The Messiah is no constant, consistent figure, dogmatically defined. The thought of the Messiah is one of such radiance that its light and colour cannot be fully revealed to any one writer or preacher. It is varied as the sea is varied. And so, in the ancient writers, we find predominant in the picture first one feature and then another. In none of the old authorities was the word a technical title applied to a personality of a specific type. He embodied the ideals and hopes and aspirations of a number of individual mystics, each different, each with his own consummation to pray for, his own cherished vision of the Kingdom to change from shadow into reality. To one the Messiah might appear as Prophet, to another as Law-giver, to another as Priest or King. And yet there was one factor common to practically all of these visionary beings. The Messiah had a commission from on high. He was, whatever form His activity might take, anointed or appointed by God.

But this does not mean that the embodiment of a Messiah was a necessary part of the Jewish conception of the Kingdom. There are schemes of the Kingdom

of God, both in the Old Testament and other Jewish literature, in which such an embodiment has no place. They are schemes which look forward, for the most part, to the unmediated intervention of God in human affairs. In such God is considered as dwelling almost visibly with His people, and thus no room is left for the offices of a man, however divinely commissioned or miraculously conceived.

From this brief summary one may readily picture the many confusing elements that face the student as he tries to unravel the strands that bind Messiahship with Jesus. The Kingdom of God is the important consideration, both in preaching and practice. For the coming of the Kingdom there was, to many, no essential need for any Messiah: to others it was only through Messiahship that the Kingdom could come at all. But, even then, there was little unanimity as to what Messiahship was or was intended to be. As Rawlinson says, in his "New Testament Doctrine of the Christ": "the meaning of the title must be sought in the context in which the word is used, rather than from its established significance." For one who claimed Messiahship there was consequently no individual with whom it would seem necessary or helpful to conform, no orthodox, anointed Christ for him to follow, no beaten track of expectation upon which his promised feet must tread. It could not well be otherwise. The realities of God always go beyond the visions, the desires, even the

prayers, of men. It would not be consistent with His eternal treatment of the human race to reveal the exactitude of His meaning or His method. That would be to take away from the human race incentive, initiative, and the essence of spiritual romance. The things of God must always, on this earth, remain, in a measure, remote and inscrutable, in order that men may have the chance to know the meaning of trust and faith. And yet, by the time that Jesus came, the hopes and longings of the ages had crystallized into something of a consistent whole; for it is obvious from the Gospels that the common contemporary expectation looked upon the Messiah as the divinely appointed deliverer of His people, most probably to spring, in some way, from the lineage of Israel's great king. For that reason He was known and referred to as the Son of David.

If, then, the advent of the Messiah, under whatever form or with whatever mission, was a contemporary hope, it is very vital to our understanding of Jesus to ask how far, in His own thoughts and in His public profession, He Himself fitted into the picture. We have seen how He certainly had an intuition that He stood in a unique relationship with God. We have seen how fearlessly and how joyously He started to preach the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Did He really think—did He really claim—to be the fulfillment of the ages, the divine deliverer appointed to lead His people into the Kingdom? That He did has been

strenuously denied. Such a commission would imply something of divinity in the recipient of it, and many a writer, as, for instance, Mr. H. G. Wells, in his "Outline of History," has affirmed that Jesus never made any claim to divinity. And such critics have at least this justification on their side, that, in His earlier preaching—so far as it is possible to establish any chronological system in the accounts of the order and occasion of His utterances—He laid no emphasis on Messiahship. Not only did He not directly affirm it, but He appears directly to have discouraged the term as applied to Himself. More strongly still does He seem to have deprecated the use of the title, "Son of David" —a title, as we have seen, if not synonymous with, at least indicative of, the expected Messiah. We remember His argument as He taught in the Temple: "How say the scribes that the Christ is the Son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. David himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he his son?" (Mark 12:35, 37). The term, perhaps, was weighted with such suggestions of earthly dominion that, at least at the outset of His ministry, it was most necessary to avoid it.

And yet there must have been some radical change in what appears to be His later teaching, for it is specifically as Messianic claimant that Jesus was popularly

acclaimed and then condemned to death: and the records have the ring of truth. There seems to be no possible reason to doubt that, towards the end, He willingly received the welcome of the multitude, as they hailed Him with the same title which before He had been so unwilling to accept—"And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, Hosanna: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David: Hosanna in the highest" (Mark 11:9-10). And, most convincing of all, when the crucial moment of the trial arrived, and Jesus had to choose between affirmation, denial, or compromise—a decision which meant life or death—He hesitated no longer. "Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy, what think ye?" (Mark 14:61, 64). What can we think?

We must look for the explanation of Jesus' early reticence, not in His own inner conviction, but in His all-conquering regard for the success of His mission. There was no unwillingness, on His own part, to accept the title of Messiah, but what held Him back was His fear of the consequences of His open acceptance

upon the minds of those whom He desired so eagerly as converts and disciples. There is little doubt but that, at the beginning, He hoped and expected that His teaching, His new interpretation of the Law and the Prophets, would appeal powerfully to His people, and that they would be won over, without too precise a definition of Himself, to an enthusiasm for the spiritual riches that He set before them. That, after all, was what He came for, and that alone. His single ambition was to bring to them the Kingdom of God in terms of a good life, a positive and believing attitude towards God. But, unfortunately, that spiritualized concept is not what the word "Messiah" implied to most of His hearers. If He took possession of that title at the outset He would be courting for Himself a very different task, and a very different destiny. The common hope of His age was for the coming of one who should put down the tyranny of Rome—an ardent nationalist, a fiery deliverer, a leader in politics and war. Most particularly was the party of the Zealots ready to follow any programme of revolutionary Messianism which seemed to promise release from the bondage of the Empire. If Jesus, with all the strange power of His personality, with His unusual approach to a ministry which seemed to have upon it the seal of a divine commission, with His vigour, His eloquence, His zeal, and His sincerity—if Jesus had proclaimed Himself as the Messiah, in the early years, He would

have been able to win popularity and a following, but it would have been at the expense of inviting, at the outset, misunderstanding and compromise. He knew full well He was not that kind of Saviour, not that personification of Messiahship. He made little attempt to pose as a nationalist; for fighting and force He had no use. But He waited until much later on, when He felt that it had been made abundantly clear from the whole tenor of His teaching that His Kingdom could not be of this world, to accept that august title which spelled His death.

But there is one title—the Son of Man—majestic and full of meaning, which is found everywhere in the Gospels, and only on the lips of Jesus Himself. The reference is John 12:34—"the multitude, therefore, answered Him, We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"—is no exception, for the phrase is obviously repeated straight from Jesus' own words. In the only other passage in the New Testament where it occurs, apart from the utterance of His own speech, its application to Him cannot be questioned: "But Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7:55-56). This title is, therefore, imposing enough and frequent

enough—it occurs sixty-nine times in the Synoptists and twelve times in St. John—to mark it out as having some special significance.

What is the meaning of the phrase, "Son of Man"?

Our only real ground for any authoritative answer must be found in Our Lord's own usage. We may assume that, if it was on His lips as often as it was, it had some very special connotation in His mind. What this connotation was will depend, to a certain extent, on individual interpretation; but through no interpretation that is worthy of serious consideration, as we shall see, can the phrase be made to convey those particular implications of Messiahship which Jesus was determined to avoid. Almost all authorities will agree that it is quite certain that it had "no definite Messianic meanings for the ordinary mass of the people." At the most it might have suggested that Jesus was a prophet, like Ezekiel, who made great use of the term. The Aramaic equivalent, *Bar-Nasha,* may, and commonly does, mean "Man."

And this is its sense in several different passages in the New Testament, as probably, for instance, in "the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). It would be straining the words to interpret this comment as anything more than simply an amplification of the preceding verse which points out that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

But there must have been many among His more

thoughtful hearers to whom the term was recognizable as having a meaning other than that conveyed in the above quotation, and Jesus Himself would hardly have used a term, and used it so frequently and so pointedly, without implying some interpretive suggestion. What that suggestion was can best be ascertained by a careful scrutiny of the passages in which the phrase occurs. And from this scrutiny the conviction can scarcely be denied that the phrase "Son of Man" is used by Jesus of One who, though of a different order, in His humility identifies Himself with men; who seeks to serve them, who shares their poverty, who, in His fidelity to them, suffers, and is brought to death. The Son of Man!—the heir of man, with all mankind's follies and imperfections upon His shoulders, His eyes dimmed by all their tears, and His spirit in travail with all their longings and all their love! No one who was exactly as they were could bear so great a load, no one who was as finite as they were could see the way to lighten it. Only He, unasked by them and unwanted by them, could stretch the measure of human destiny that stifled their souls. Such is the note that comes from passage after passage—a little tremulous, a little sad, but full, at the end, of the music of a great triumph. What is the impression the Son of Man leaves behind Him on one who reads such words as these?—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt.

8:20). "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matt. 11:19). "The Son of Man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him" (Mark 9:31). "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). "But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48).

Although Jesus seeks to be true to Scripture, and although He does not identify the conception of the Son of Man with the conception of the Messiah in so many words, yet it can hardly be doubted that, as His ministry developed, these two strands of self-consciousness could not be kept separate. We have seen why, in all probability, at the beginning, He did not assert His Messiahship—His conception of it being so different from the common martial and nationalistic expectancy of Israel. He did find, however, in the title "Son of Man," those elements of gentleness and humility with which He was so anxious to impress His hearers. And we may not be entirely misreading His mind if we assume that, to Him, the two meanings were identical—the Son of Man being used because, in His understanding, it was far more appropriate than the other to the spirit in which He longed to bring about the conquest of the world. If that was the case He introduced into Judaism a totally new conception

of the Messianic office, for, as Dalman says, in his "Words of Jesus," "Suffering and death for the actual possessor of the Messianic dignity are, in fact, unimaginable according to the testimony of the prophets." At the same time, true as this statement is, suffering and death were, in some way, inextricably interwoven with many of the prophetic visions of the destiny of Israel itself. Redemptive suffering is, and always has been, a fact in the experience of mankind, both individually and nationally. Its cogent lessons and elusive philosophy could not have escaped the attention of such keen observers of human life as the seers of the Old Testament. Therefore it is with no sense of astonishment or incongruity that we read such passages as the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah—"He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth. . . . Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Israel 53:7 and 12).

This, with other similar passages, gives the conception of the suffering servant of God, which has played so large a part in Christological literature. What that whole conception meant to Christ will be fully discussed in a later chapter. But such statements were never inter-

preted by the Jews as having reference to the Messiah. The other conception—that of a national leader, an all-conquering king of the Hebrew race—was far too strong to admit any note of submission or defeat such as the Isaiah passage cannot fail to sound. The whole content of the prophecies centres, without doubt, in the thought of the ideal Israel, the "righteous remnant," which should feel the abject discipline of every human indignity, but which, in the end, would rise up triumphant to enter into the blessed promises of God. One of the great untold and untellable inner struggles of the Christ was to reconcile in Himself, and with Himself in mind, these various strands of national expectation. He believed that He was the deliverer; He also knew that He must serve and suffer. Was any reconciliation possible? And, if it was, could He make that reconciliation clear to the thought of His contemporaries? True to His spirit and temper, He never in so many words applies the thought of the "suffering servant" explicitly to Himself. He knew that, if His people were ever going to understand the new meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven, they would realize that triumph—spiritual triumph—is impossible without tribulation, and success—spiritual success—an idle dream without service. He waited for the event to prove the content of His claims; and He fulfilled, without advertisement, His duty as He saw it. The thoughts, however, that are typified by Isaiah were probably much in

His mind as He tried to visualize His commission—especially during His later ministry. And he left behind Him an impression—for which we have no explanation unless it originated from His own teaching—that He was to be identified with the man of sorrows, the child of God immeasurably acquainted with grief—which made the reference of the Isaiah passage, and, by analogy, all other similar passages, to Himself absolutely inevitable in the judgment of the early Church. When Philip expounded the scripture to the man of Ethiopia who was "of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians," he was asked to interpret the very verses in Isaiah which have been quoted above. "And Philip opened his mouth, and, beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35). Was Philip a prophet, blessed with a new and powerful interpretation? Or was he not rather repeating what he had heard in the official teaching of the Church?

But, in addition to this identification of the Son of Man with the humble, obedient, distressed, and suffering servant of the Lord, the phrase is also used with quite a different implication. In many passages of the New Testament it suggests authority, power, dignity, glorification. It is used in the sense of one who has the right to exercise prerogatives ordinarily looked upon as divine, who affects even the ultimate destiny of man, and is triumphantly authenticated and vindicated by

God Himself. It is still to be noted, however, that the authority is a spiritual one; the power is over the souls and wills of men, not over their bodies; the dignity is that of divinity, not of the order that is exemplified in the carnal lives of men; and the glorification speaks of other-worldly promises and rewards, distinct from the insignia of temporal position. The Son of Man is still a Saviour, but a Saviour who saves as a superior, not as an equal. There is infinite grace, as there is infinite majesty, in the assurances of this high master of privilege; "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. 9:6). "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also shall be ashamed of him, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). "And I say unto you, everyone who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8-9). Here speaks the personification of power, the arbiter of the spiritual destinies of mankind, the leader who, without feeling it necessary to indicate the source of His authority, nevertheless takes it for granted that hope and happiness are His to give. Here is a Son of Man, mightily confronting the issues that lie at the basis of human life.

For the antecedents of the term "Son of Man," used in this connection in the Old Testament, most readers would recall the words in the Book of Daniel, upon

which, doubtless, some of the applications were based —"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even unto the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14). Here the Son of Man is typically a national figure—really the figure of a nation —which appears to stand for the divinely restored Israel. This Israel of the new birth will rule triumphantly when the great persecuting nations, typified by the four beasts, have been destroyed. The nation seems to have recovered its individuality; it seems to have realized what it had always thought of as its fulfillment; it seems to have taken its place in the allotted scheme of destiny, ordained by God, by which a human or earthly instrument is made to do the work of the divine will. This Son of Man is a people full of manhood, which has no other desire or motive than to make God's purpose clear and complete in the lives of men.

From this national personification the transition to the thought of an individual was easy; and this transition is made, and most impressively expressed, in the "Similitudes of the Book of Enoch." Although there is some difference of judgment upon the point among

scholars, the consensus of opinion is that these "Similitudes" are pre-Christian in date. Canon R. A. Charles in his "Book of Enoch," places them between 94 and 79, or 70 and 64 B.C.; Schürer, in his "History of the Jewish People," prefers the time of Herod, that is, between 37 and 34 B.C. In either case they were early enough to have a very definite influence on the thought of Our Lord's time. And that influence accounts for a great deal that otherwise would be inexplicable in some of Jesus' statements, such as those which have been quoted above. In the "Similitudes" the Son of Man is a pre-existent being who comes to judge and to rule in God's name—a conception which, because of its congruity with the hereditary hope of Israel, and its compelling complexion of justice and equity and righteousness, cannot have failed to impress all the more thoughtful and understanding of Jesus' hearers. The actual words are such as these, as we find them in the translation of R. H. Charles: "And there I saw One who had a head of days, and his head was white like wool. And with him was another being whose countenance had the appearance of a man. His face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels. And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things concerning the Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was, and why he went with the Head of Days. And he answered and said unto me: This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness, with

whom dwelleth righteousness, and revealeth the treasures of that which is hidden; because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him, and whose lot hath the pre-eminence before the Lord of Hosts forever. . . . And the Son of Man whom thou hast seen shall raise up the kings and mighty from their seats, and the strong from their thrones, and shall loose the reins of the strong and break the teeth of sinners. . . ." ("Similitudes," Chapter 46). And again, and more significantly; "For from the beginning the Son of Man was hidden, and the Most High preserved him in the presence of His might, and revealed him to the elect. . . . And the Lord of Spirits will abide over them, and with that Son of Man shall they eat, and lie down and rise up for ever and ever" ("Similitudes," Chap. 62:7 and 14).

Jesus does not, perhaps, refer directly to these "Similitudes," nor draw His conception of the Son of Man from them. Nevertheless, their teaching must have been in the minds of many in His audience, to colour their interpretation of His message. Quite apart from the teaching of this one book, Jesus was doubtless aware of similar ideas, varying in their form, which had differing degrees of influence on the current thought of His contemporaries. It is significant that He does not use the term, "Son of Man," in any connection with the idea of pre-existence, an attribute which is among the most striking to be found in the "Similitudes." And yet the idea of pre-existence was never very far from His

thoughts. It is quite obvious that many of His public references were to the prophecies of Daniel. The influence of the "Similitudes" suggests that their teaching had, from early times, been read in a personal sense, and with a definite, if modified, Messianic motive. The expectant atmosphere with which Our Lord was surrounded was charged with many half-formed impressions gleaned from many ill-defined sources. One is only concerned here to note that the Book of Enoch had a contribution to make to the conception of the Son of Man, which stood in sharp contrast to the mere idea of obedient and humble service on an almost entirely earthly footing, and laid its emphasis on an exalted commission belonging to Him who knew the intimacy of the Ancient of Days.

It can be accepted in the light of what has been said, and without making unwarranted assumptions, that the term "Son of Man" had a very definite meaning for Jesus. It was a part of His own self-consciousness, and it reflected His own conception of His work. It is a necessary part of this present enquiry to analyse as far as possible what that meaning was for Him, and how far the import of His work was influenced by it. If He thought of Himself as the Son of Man to the neglect of almost any other title, as apparently He did, what was the figure which stood before the vision of His contemplation? What duties did it have; what privileges and responsibilities? We conceive of Jesus, not as

a fanatic driven on by an unreasoning impulse, but as an artist fulfilling an ordered plan of design. Perhaps the incentive that underlies His purpose is hidden behind the veil of the title, "Son of Man."

It must be remembered that, in the hope and expectation of the race, as far as, and perhaps further than, the race was represented in the phrase, "Son of Man," there was always the sense of redemptive suffering. This was one of the recognized traditions of the past. But it is quite definitely to be understood that this redemptive suffering was for the people of Israel, and had no part in the Messianic idea. That is to say, there was to be no individual on whom the sins of the people were to be visited. They sinned collectively, and collectively they paid the price. To atone for all that had passed, the people, Israel, must make new and painful efforts at reformation, and only then would the Son of Man—the nation as exhibiting the divine principle of repentance, retribution, and reward—be fully vindicated. At the same time, through the teachings of Apocalyptic, the idea of a celestial deliverer and judge had been clearly established, and must have been the spiritual and intellectual heritage of at least a part of the people to whom Jesus preached. And what is the most significant and remarkable part of His preaching —we might very well say, of His genius—was His unique ability to blend the two ideas of suffering and exaltation, of humility and power, and make the appli-

cation of both conceptions to the Messiah clear and definite. He picked up, as it were, the scattered threads of His nation's high thought, and made them vivid and vital in one supreme expression. To His generation He propounded a paradox—none the less difficult to appreciate because its separate elements were perfectly familiar, and had been over a long space of time—the paradox of the suffering Messiah. Here the two strands of thought and expectation come together, and there emerges an august and pre-eminent figure, holding in His hands every rein of destiny—the glory of sacrifice and service, even unto death, the happiness of obedience to the moral law of God, and the majesty of domination over the spirits and souls of men. Such was the Christ as Messiah and Son of Man.

It is this paradox which is set before us in the narrative of the Transfiguration. That great experience in Jesus' life does not seem, in the history of Christian thought, to have received the attention that is its due. In reality it is the central point of the ministry, and the beginning of a new and explicit self-revelation. At last He had won from Peter the great affirmation—"Thou art the Christ" (Mark 8:29), and a fresh enthusiasm burst upon Him. So far, His mission, in large measure, had seemed a failure. The Transfiguration was to herald the dawning of a better day.

It is impossible to understand the true significance of the Transfiguration unless we see in it the supreme

manifestation of both suffering and glory, blended together in one compelling whole. Jesus seemed on the point of being beaten—and what that meant to one of His sensitive and enthusiastic nature it will ever be impossible to describe, for the delicacies of divine feeling transcend the power of words, even of imagination. He had had to flee from opposition, and His flight had carried Him beyond the confines of His own people, Israel. He was outcast, despised, rejected. It is true that His immediate friends had, through their spokesman, acknowledged that He was the Christ; but that assurance was little more than a verbal gesture, for even they did not understand Him or the meaning of His mission. And yet with this acknowledgement He had to be content; for no such had come from any other quarter. To the world He was an imposter, a dreamer, a fanatic. And it would hardly be fair to condemn the world of that day for its judgment. The Jews had hoped for the Messiah in His glory; they found a travel-stained preacher, bearing with Him none of the insignia of place or power. As He Himself implied, many of them were ashamed of Him; and the hardness of their hearts kept pace with the poverty of their insight. Could He ever make them understand? The negative answer seemed to echo back with increasing force. And now He was becoming convinced that it was the true answer. The mass of the people never would understand. It should not be forgotten, in making any esti-

mate of Our Lord's success during His life on earth, that, speaking in terms of numbers, that success was infinitesimally small. The roster of true believers at His death was about one hundred and twenty, as we read in the Book of the Acts. Doubtless there were many others whom He had touched and befriended and aroused, but the professed fruit of His earthly mission was less than the congregation of a small modern church. It is no wonder that the sense of failure sometimes outmeasured the blessed hope of success.

The narrative of the Transfiguration tells the story of how the eternal and transcendental reaches out through human relationships to endow them with a richer meaning and a permanent validity. It is the account of a supernatural, ecstatic moment made intelligible and helpful to us by the fact that it lies within the compass of an earthly mission, carried on in the interests of ordinary lives. It shows divinity appearing on a mortal plane, and dignifying its apparent futility.

And so there went with Him on to the mountain His chosen friends and disciples, Peter, James, and John. Here, at least, were some who believed in Him. Passing frailty might cause in them a momentary failure, but at heart they were His forever. And through them spoke the silent voice of that great hungry soul of humanity which, down all the ages, would long for what He had to give. Their presence proved to Him that there would always be some who needs must love the

highest when they see it. Their connection with the Son of Man was unforgettable, for, as they had seen Him in His disappointment and travail, so now they saw Him in His triumph. And their connection with the Messiah was unforgettable, for, as they had seen in Him the lonely servant of the race, so now they saw in Him the supreme arbiter of its destinies, and they were the link between Him and all those who, in the generations to come, would worship Him as Saviour.

And then, to show Him that He came, not merely as one outstanding and isolated figure in the religious experience of mankind, but as a culmination of the spiritual tradition and expectation of the only race that had conscientiously and systematically walked along the road that led to God; to strengthen in His mind the conviction that He was the one for whom the law had prepared and to whom prophecy pointed, on that Mount of Transfiguration He was welcomed by the two great heroes of His people's history, Elijah, the typical prophet, and Moses, the supreme giver of the law. If the presence of His living friends gave Him hope and encouragement for the future, the homage of Moses and Elijah was a sign of the deathless continuity of religious experience. There must be dark moments—these two leaders of old had known darker ones in their time than even He had as yet been called upon to face in His—but the light that prevails at last over the shadows is an unquenchable light. Jesus must have felt

that, if the power of God in human life could triumph in the paralyzing blackness that had surrounded Elijah or blinded Moses in the midst of his revolutionary and ungrateful gypsies in the desert, it was still vital enough to carry Him and His followers through the mist of opposition that had grown up about them, and bring His cause to victory. There is no greater urge to sustained endeavour, for any of us, than the knowledge that others have struggled and suffered, even to the depths, and still have been faithful to the end.

And finally, as the third element in this great revival of confidence, there came, as at the Baptism, the voice of divine approval: "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him" (Mark 9:7). Thus sounded once more the assurance that His relation to God was unique; and once more there welled up within Him the burning conviction that put Himself, His nature, His mission, in a vivid and compelling setting. If what the voice said was true—and there was the persuasion of God behind it—then He could have no fears for the future, no doubts, no self-criticisms. The voice had never failed His people; the experience of Moses and Elijah proved that. It was not failing of acceptance to-day; the earnest loyalty of Peter and James and John proved that. It never would fail until it had found an echo in every human heart; His own spiritual intuition proved that. Man never lived to whom encouragement so lavish and so unmistakable had been given. It is no wonder that

Jesus went down from the mountain with a new determination marked in His face, and a new fire blazing in His eyes.

But with Him went, at the same time, an almost happy recognition of the price He had to pay—the price all of us, in some degree or another, have to pay—for winning salvation in Himself or others. Moses and Elijah had paid the price; they had known loneliness and rejection and despair. Peter, James and John were learning the lesson; they had sacrificed all that man held dear to follow One who seemed to have accomplished little except to arouse among people of all classes the intolerance of prejudice. Now it was left for Him to equal, even to surpass, what they had done. The lesson was written large upon the pages of human history that through tribulation we reach the stars. Therefore He knew with greater certainty the nature of His remaining task—through service, through love and suffering and humility to prove His calling. His was the high privilege of taking upon His shoulders, as Son of Man, the burden of His people's suffering and sin. He had, a few days before the Transfiguration, spoken to His disciples of His coming death, but they had found it hard to understand. Death ran counter to all their hopes for Him, to all that they conceived Messiah should be. But they must be made to understand. Death was not the failure of His Messiahship; it was the fulfilment of its deepest meanings. There-

fore He said to them again, "The Son of Man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him" (Mark 9:31).

It is the inevitable tendency of all human vision to see events and even personalities under the aspect of time. Our world is three dimensional; our gauge of actuality is the clock. That is why so few of us are really spiritual: for the spirit leads us on into dimensions that have no number, and beyond the confines of then and now. We can never understand God or the things of God if we try to measure them with a yard stick or hold them accountable to an hour glass. That is the habit of this world: we must learn the standards of another. The good thing I do is not, and never can be, an isolated act. It had its inception in some remote ray of idealism, bestowed by God and mediated to me through temperament, personality, heredity—the majestic procession of human emotion and meaning of which I am a part. It is instinctive with us to judge, even of right and wrong, as though the passing moment held all their content, when, as a matter of fact, future and past are always more significant than present. We shall never understand the power and reality of the spirit life until we learn to refer the value of all action to an indeterminate fruition yet to be. Religion teaches us to regard what is only in relation to what has been and what is to come. So with the revelation on the Mount of Transfiguration. Men had seen Jesus under the

aspect of time; but the witnesses there saw Him under the aspect of eternity. That was the supreme disclosure of that amazing moment. In what we call the Transfiguration, Jesus, the suffering, serving Son of Man, is revealed as the eternally dominant Son of Man. The suffering Son of Man and the glorified Son of Man are the same!

If some intimate biographer had asked Jesus on earth what He thought of Himself in relation to the Kingdom of God, whether or not, that is, He looked upon Himself as the Christ, the answer can hardly have failed to be equivocal, for at the moment He could not claim the fullness of completion since the task was only half done. Doubtless He did look upon Himself as the Christ, for He knew that He was doing the Messiah's work; but doubtless, also, there was a hesitancy, even in His thought, for He could not claim the Messiah's prerogatives until His Father's will had been accomplished. The passion, the mission, the destiny, the final outpouring of love and gentleness on the part of the Son of Man, must be consummated before He could be glorified. We are to see, in a later chapter, how Jesus actually began His Messianic work. That He dared to do so at all is, humanly speaking, one of the most arresting indications of His sublime courage and determined conviction, for so many of the apparently essential features of the Messiah's expected character were lacking. Dignity, rulership, influence

commensurate with the Messianic ideal—all familiar requirements—where were they? People in general were well aware that they had no part in Him. Jesus Himself was well aware that they had no outward part in Him. But he did not deny them; He knew that, in spite of men's misinterpretations of the terms, they were valid. One who rules in God's name must eventually exhibit them. But not now—at least in manifest appearance. Jesus is, in a sense, His own forerunner. He did in reality claim these marks of Messiahship, but only as the Christ that was to be. It is most important to bear in the forefront of our thought the fact that the mind of Jesus cannot be judged solely from the part He chose to play in the early days of His ministry among men. His contemporaries may be forgiven for regarding Him, not as the Messiah, but as simply another more able, more eloquent, more gracious prophet. Perhaps many to-day need forgiveness, with less excuse, for that same mistaken judgment. That was not His estimate of Himself; for to Him the future was the touchstone of the present.

The impression He left behind Him was one of conviction. Reflecting upon the life of Jesus, and true to the spirit in which that life was lived, the early Church said: "Let all the house of Israel, therefore, know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36).

CHAPTER VI

THE SON OF MAN AS THE KINGDOM

JESUS, then, came preaching the Kingdom of God, and Himself as the Son of Man, vitally concerned and bound up with its realization. And the question that must immediately have faced Him was as to how He could make the existence and nature of that Kingdom so real and so appealing that men would in very truth be willing to sacrifice all that they might gain it. Mere description was not enough, whatever might be the earnestness and eloquence with which the preacher approached his task. Speech was of vast influence, but it failed in the last pinch of conviction. It might attract, but it could not convert. Jesus' problem was to make the Kingdom live as a reality already foreshadowed, or, at least, as hopefully anticipated, for the persuasion of those to whom it was no more—and never seemed likely to be any more—than a dream, an agreeable, if fantastic, expectation. Could He possibly produce any visible or tangible evidence of what the Kingdom of Heaven actually was? Could He make the value and significance of allowing God's power and rule to be the controlling factor in human lives so recognizable that

men, when once they were brought face to face with the new order, would never again be content with the old? It was a problem which called, as it were, for an unparalleled effort to set forward the clock of time, and show the world what it might be if the advice of prophet and priest were taken, and mankind made up its mind unswervingly to follow the will of God. What would Heaven on Earth be like? Was there any way of making its future beauties present realities?

Jesus' answer was convincing—at least to His own generation and to the truly devoted of every succeeding age. It took the form of what, from His day, the Christian world has agreed to call the miracles. The very word is an offence to many. The idea that lies behind it meets with contempt and ridicule. But that is because miracles have been most generally discussed, and are being increasingly regarded to-day, apart from the general current of Jesus' thinking, and their treatment has suffered accordingly. It should be obvious that one so exceptional as the Christ would find no difficulty in giving a more convincing proof of the content of His teaching than was promised by the mere spoken word. After all, the miracles of His hands are no more miraculous than the miracles of His mouth, and in no sense as miraculous as the miracle of His personality and nature. It is a very shortsighted critic indeed who would accept without question the fact that, when He said "Thy sins be forgiven thee," a new birth actually came

to the sinner, but would find insuperable obstacles to the belief that, when He said "Arise and walk," new strength came to his legs and feet. There are miracles to-day in the quiet faith and courage that overcome pain, in the trust that makes light of disappointment and loss, in the hope that shines through the darkness of sorrow and death.

The miracles must be regarded as fundamental to Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God, not merely as episodes and signs incidental to His ministry. It may be true that, in the first three Gospels, the miracle is not regarded as a token of power that would validate Jesus' authority, as is the case with the Fourth Gospel. But, on the other hand, the miracle is not, in the judgment of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, simply an act of mercy or graciousness, or a reward of grace in return for individual manifestations of faith. The miracle is rather taken by those who had some spiritual intuition of the nature of Jesus, without excited or impressive comment, as something which might normally be expected—in Him. As we saw before, the disciples did not believe in Jesus because of the miracles—whatever the unimaginative masses may have done—but they believed in the authority and genuineness of the miracles because of what Jesus was. To them His miracles were as much to be expected as His sympathy.

And, if the disciples regarded these marvellous happenings in the matter-of-fact way which their records

would seem to indicate, so, most assuredly, Jesus Himself must have thought of them as supremely natural and inevitable. So one day shall we. The majority of the so-called New Testament miracles are miracles to us only because they go beyond our present horizon of knowledge. But our present horizon of knowledge, and all future horizons of knowledge, are materially discovered. That is to say, when we use the word "knowledge" in this sense, we are referring almost, if not quite, exclusively to scientific knowledge. We are trusting to our test tubes, our telescopes, our applied electricity, to measure or weigh each large or small component part of the universe which surrounds us. We are strictly three-dimensional. We are unhesitatingly approaching what we call reality from the standpoint, and with the standards, of man. Jesus, on the other hand, deficient though He may have been in a knowledge of science as we understand it, had a vast reservoir of spiritual knowledge, the existence of which is barely, even now, casting a shadow upon the imagination of any but our most intellectual and devout. The miracles, as Jesus saw them, and as mankind, immeasurably developed, may come to see them, exhibit powers and privileges which are characteristic of the life of the Kingdom of God, and may be expected when that life is actually realized. To visualize what this may mean it will be necessary for us completely to revise the whole method and tradition of our thought. We shall

be compelled to break away from the patchwork of cause and effect, which our experimentalists and pragmatic philosophers have so laboriously fashioned, and face anew the problem of creation and the riddle of personality. We shall be able to do so, and we shall do so with success, when once we realize, as Jesus realized, that, as soon as God's sovereignty is accepted in thinking and acting, as soon as obedience to His rule is unequivocally made the object of men's purpose, as soon, therefore, as humanity is brought into living touch with God, new forces are at our disposal. The miracle is the revelation of how perfect life may be when lived upon the spiritual plane; and, if, at present, miracle is beyond the reach or understanding of modern science, that is only because modern science is, for the moment, but indirectly concerned with the spiritual realm.

But science is pioneering along the only possible path. As to-day our physicists are bending their every effort to wrest from the processes of nature the fullness of that energy they know to be stored up within the smallest fragment of matter, a drop of water or a splinter of wood—an energy incalculable in its terrific potentialities—so there are some at work to-day—we call them psychologists, psychics, mystics—bent upon exploring the infinite resources of the human spirit. The dynamic they will one day reveal is now beyond our imagination, although Jesus gave us a very slight

indication. To all save very few of this or any other generation the whole conception is so unthinkable as to be tainted with the suspicion of nonsense. But to those who have sufficient mystical or mental equipment to entertain the thought of the possibility of a surpassing revelation of spiritual energy—and such probably exist in far greater numbers among Slavs and Orientals than among Anglo-Saxons and Teutons—it must be obvious that no one save Jesus has ever yet made the faintest effort to realize all the powers that lie in the human will and the human mind and the human soul. There is an interesting passage, bearing on this point, in Shailer Mathews' recent book, "The Growth of the Idea of God," when, in discussing the problem of suffering, he says: "Suffering emerged when, thanks to the evolutionary process, there appeared forms superior to these physical forces" (volcanoes, storms and other natural activities). "If such new forms of existence had no other power than that of suffering, one might well picture the process as evil. But, as these new forms became personal, they had a power of living on a plane out of the reach of impersonal forces." Such has been the verdict of history. Mankind has done more than learned to live on a plane out of the reach of some, at least, of these impersonal forces. It has seized those very same forces, and has harnessed them to its will and its ambition. And the rest of the road, long though it may be, is, presumably, continuous with what has

passed. Gradually, as these new "personal forms" learn the secret of all that is contained and implied in the possession of personality, more and more will the rest of the "impersonal forces" yield to their domination, and sickness and even death may pass away; while, at the same time, the constructive spiritual forces will show their superiority over jealousy, greed, selfishness —all, in their essence, destructive—and the Kingdom of God will come. Did not Jesus show the logic of this result? And did He not give the key to the whole riddle when He said, "With God all things are possible"?

And the reason, perhaps, why we do not make the most of life's resources, why we do not call upon them for all the succour, all the contentment, all the power, they could give, is either because we are entirely out of touch with God—like a cataract dried and bare since something has dammed the upper channel—or because our faith in Him is so imperfect as to be ineffectual—like a chord of music from which the dominant notes are lacking. Faith is the attitude of mind—rather, of the whole personality—by which a man enters into a living and effective touch with God. It is not, as so many think, a passive state, but ardently dynamic. It is faith which makes God's powers available to man: and men may share this faith with Jesus, and so enter into His powers. This is no mere fanciful exaggeration, however much it may be out of touch with the thought of to-day. But no one could possibly estimate the in-

calculable power of human personality, if that personality were once to be fully realized by intimate touch with the being of God, from whom it is derived. If man could wholly release the dynamic of God which is in him, who could say that he might not approach the sublimity of Jesus' manifestation of the Kingdom of God? But this means a faith which goes immeasurably beyond that calm, inactive state of mind which the word usually designates—further even than that empirical faith which the apostles stumblingly essayed. We read how, on one occasion, they came to Him with the story of their defeat: "Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could we not cast it out?" His answer rebukes their half-heartedness, as it rebukes the half-heartedness of all generations of men without exception: "And He saith unto them, Because of your little faith: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17:20). A condition of faith, if not fully developed, at least potentially perfect, was necessary before Jesus could sketch, even in outline, the blessings of the Kingdom: "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:58), and conversely, "She said within herself, If I do but touch His garment, I shall be made whole. But Jesus, turning and seeing her, said, Daughter, be of good cheer; thy faith hath made thee

whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour" (Matt. 9:22-23).

Much of what has been said above will strike many a modern reader as grotesque and exaggerated. It is fashionable to-day to discredit and disbelieve in miracles. And the reason is not far to seek. We live in a world that, to our scientific eyes, appears so orderly that any infringement—even a presumed infringement—of that principle of order appears illogical and almost blasphemous. This orderly view of the cosmos, held commonly among us all, was the product, of course, of the scientific thought of the last generation. Although the conception of strict causality is passing away from the science of to-day, yet the conclusions of the science of to-day will not meet with general acceptance until far into to-morrow. And the mechanistic philosophy, which gave more or less popular expression to the science of uniformity, could find little place for miracles, in the sense of happenings which contravened the usually accepted system of nature. The assumptions of this mechanistic philosophy—that the world, for instance, wound up like a watch, must pursue its allotted course without deviation or hesitation until it ran down again—were easily intelligible, and led to a very widespread disbelief in the miraculous. Few had the insight to appreciate the fact that the mechanistic philosophy contradicts, by implication, one of the essential attributes of God—His omnipotence—in that it holds that

He automatically limited Himself by the act of creation. It is impossible to be an adherent of this school of thought, as, perhaps without knowing it, most of the people with whom we mingle daily are, and at the same time give full allegiance to the Christian's idea of God. For a Christian believes that, when God brought the potential cosmos into existence, He performed what we call a miracle. And he asks why, if God could perform such a miracle once, could He not do so again. Is it not more natural that He should continue His task of creation and re-creation than that He should deny Himself the use and exercise of those powers which are most unmistakably His, in order not to offend the logic of His race of human beings? Cardinal Newman expresses the thought, in his "Present Position of Catholics," very concisely: "For the most part, when God begins He goes on. We conceive that when He first did a miracle, He began a series; what He commenced, He continued; what has been, will be. Surely this is good and clear reasoning. To my own mind, certainly, it is incomparably more difficult to believe that the Divine Being should do one miracle and no more, than that He should do a thousand; that He should do one great miracle only, than that He should do a multitude of less besides." Luckily the hold of that philosophy which limits God to one miracle, and no more, is weakening, and even science itself is afraid to be dogmatic. A fragmentary knowledge of three-dimensional existence

can, surely, never answer all the riddles that crowd infinity and eternity. Those branches of psychology which to-day are showing us, in no inconclusive way, the power of mind over matter, particularly the matter of our own bodies, through the instrumentality of subconscious suggestion, and in many other ways, ought at least to be warning us that there are elemental forces, within reach of our own control, which can produce, if not the miracles, at least the unexpected and unexplained. We must learn to be more alive to wonder, and less alive to scepticism. May it not, after all, be true, as Harry Emerson Fosdick puts it, that "miracle is only God's continual use of His own self-conditioned powers to work out, in ways surprising and inexplicable to man, His will for us and for the world"?

Another attack upon the miracles of the Gospels has been along historical and critical lines. Sincere and determined efforts have been made to delete all record of them from the Gospels on the grounds that they were never in the original documents, and are out of keeping with the general tone and style of those authorities. Such a hypothesis may here and there be justified, but this somewhat peremptory way of dealing with the Gospel narratives by no means disposes of the general question of the essential nature of the miracles. So entwined are they with the essential substance of the story, so inevitable in their nature and teaching, so illustrative of all that Jesus was trying to preach and prac-

tise, that the Gospels without them would become little more than a pious recital of moral and spiritual maxims. And the attempt to discredit them all, as being unauthentic glosses, has signally failed; as was only natural in the face of the instinct that makes even the superficial reader realize that, in the accounts of the miracles, he is reading about the Son of God in action, as only the Son of God could show Himself in action, and in the only kind of action which would be wholly appropriate to His power and dignity and promise. As a matter of fact, in answer to these critics who would challenge their historical and scriptural authenticity, accounts of the miracles are found in the oldest Gospel sources, and could be removed only by imperilling the whole tradition. It is not as though they were confined to only one of the evangelists; and it is not as though they were found grouped together in certain well-defined passages—both of which considerations, were they the case, would render it a task of less difficulty to insist upon the suggestion of their later origin and insertion. But neither of these possibilities is the case. They are found in the accounts of all four of the Gospels—though the Fourth Gospel is a matter for separate consideration—and they arise spontaneously and naturally in the course of the story, affording no indication that there are distinct "miracle passages," with the introduction of which other hands than those of the original chronicler might have had something to do.

Any unbiassed student, with no antecedent theory to prove, would admit that it is impossible and unscholarly to criticize and prejudge the miracles of the Gospels upon a priori grounds. There they stand, as an integral and vital part of the records upon which, in main part, the future of Christianity rests. They cannot be treated as non-existent; they cannot be expunged; they can be interpreted. And the interpretation which is presented to the readers of these pages is that they represent an indication, given by Jesus, of the blessed state of the Kingdom of God.

But by this it is not meant to be implied that every recorded miracle need, of necessity, be interpreted as miraculous. It is perfectly permissible and possible to accept the principle of miracle, and yet accept the thought that, in some individual instances, ordinary fact has been approximated to miracle. This is especially true of the so-called nature miracles, and with those that have to do with factors other than human beings, where there was no possibility of checking the report of the miracle by appeal to the one upon whom it was enacted. Naturally no one of the evangelists would intentionally deceive, but sometimes, in the generation that passed before our Gospels were created, a saying of Jesus might have been repeated as an action of Jesus, or a new turn given to what had been ordinary incident, and its modified form incorporated in the material upon which the evangelists drew. A suggestive instance is told

as follows: "And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received the half-shekel came to Peter and said, Doth not your master pay the half-shekel? . . . And Jesus said unto Peter, Go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a shekel; that take and give unto them for thee and me" (Matt. 17:24 and 27). It is an interesting little anecdote, without much valid bearing on the serious study of miracles. Perhaps memory embellished the story; perhaps Jesus spoke in a spirit of fun; perhaps Peter sold some fish and paid the tax with the proceeds; perhaps a fish which had swallowed a coin had been caught, and fancy invented the rest of the incident. It matters very little, as nothing in the story has any bearing on the life of the Kingdom of God. It is quite a different matter with the miracles of health and healing. In them and through them we are permitted to catch a glimpse of another world order in which the new conditions of life are of the utmost significance. They are the living pictures which represent, more vividly than words could ever do, the vitalizing happiness that comes from the acceptance of the standards and the will of God. The state of mind which drives the possessor to an inclusive condemnation of all that the world has called miraculous is as illogical as it is uncritical, for, even on the very lowest plane that we can treat as sentient—that of animal life—we are surrounded by mir-

acles. Dogs can hear sounds too acute for human ears, cats can see in the dark, carrier pigeons can make their way home through miles of air, butterflies, as Fabre tells us, can find each other at an incredible distance. These are wonders that may be explained in time, like the feats of Houdini, handcuffed in his box at the bottom of the river, or the hazel twig that twitches in the diviner's fingers to show the way to water. But they are nothing at all when compared to those powers that, even in our undeveloped life, are at the disposal of him who unquestioningly surrenders himself to God's goodness, and, in faith and hope and love, tries to carry out His commands—"possessing nothing, yet having all things."

It is, therefore, to the more impressive miracles of Jesus that we turn. And there is no passage that gives a clearer picture of their general nature than Jesus' own words in answer to the question of John the Baptist. Celebrated and familiar as the passage is, it is well to remind ourselves once more of the exact phraseology: "Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go your way and tell John the things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them"

(Matt. 11:2-6). We ask ourselves what the Baptist's question really meant. Steeped in the tradition and prophecy of his people, as he was, what was the fulfillment that he expected from the Messiah, from him the latchet of whose shoes he was unworthy to unloose? It has been thought by some that John sincerely doubted whether Jesus was really the Messiah: others take the view that this question as to whether He was the one who should come is merely a challenge to incite Jesus to display His true nature at once, and show His authority in immediate and unmistakable signs. Whatever may have been the texture of John's thoughts, as he lay in prison, nothing can alter the obvious truth that he expected certain results from the coming of the Messiah, and that Jesus knew what those expectations were, and phrased His answer in a way which would satisfy them. It is doubtful, of course, whether John ever thought of the Kingdom of God in terms of a Messianic age definitely realized on earth. Probably what he looked for from Jesus was something which suggested the breaking, as it were, of the other-worldly age upon the present, any indication of which would be in the nature of portent. So far such indication had not been very ostensibly forthcoming. If Jesus were really the Messiah, what reason was there for delay? Jesus' reply is both corrective and reassuring. The new age was coming, but not in accordance with man's impatience. It was not yet, but still it threw before it the

beams of its advent. God's power was at work because the Messiah was at work. Jesus' implication is that inroads upon evil were indeed being effected, and, to that extent, the Kingdom of God was being actualized. But even so, there remains evil beyond any possibility of our reach—evil in nature, the tragedy of human circumstance, the unapproachable evil itself. Hence the sheer necessity of His apocalyptic teaching. In the end it is God's act that triumphs—or nothing. Alone we can go no further than a certain point, whatever miracle we work. Until He is Sovereign, the dualism of good and evil remains, and the Kingdom cannot be realized. But the manifest power of God in the miracle is an earnest of God's final overthrow of all that evil means, and a promise of the establishment of that complete and supreme good which is the charter of the Kingdom. The reality of its forshadowed presence could be seen in the performance of certain deeds, of which, perhaps, John had not detected the full significance. Centuries before, a wise and far-seeing prophet had spoken of works of mercy and healing in connection with the coming of the Kingdom. To the fulfillment of such a vision Jesus was appealing: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompence of God; he will come and save you. When the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing" (Isaiah 35:4-6).

The full meaning of the Kingdom of God on earth is, therefore, implicit in Jesus' answer to the wistful question of His forerunner. Not only are the physical needs of men cared for with gifts of health and life for those who have faith, but, what perhaps in the Baptist's eyes was even more important, the tidings of spiritual hope and happiness are being broadcast even to those whose worldly conditions make them seem beneath the dignity of any gift. Jesus Christ as the Kingdom of God could be content with nothing short of moral perfection. That is, after all, the ultimate goal even of health and life. And no stone must be left unturned to pave the way of moral perfection for every one of the children of God. Therefore He must preach—not mere platitudes of moral exhortation, not mere invitations to repentance and fresh endeavour, not mere warnings of the penalties of disobedience, but hopeful, constructive lessons of God's goodness and mercy and love. He must make men see that the prizes of this world are of very small account when measured with the blessings of eternal life. He must make men see that these blessings might be won by everyone who tried, with his whole heart and soul and mind, to do God's will. Salvation, until His time, had often depended, at least in its essential features, on somewhat negative excellence. The prohibitions of the Law had an insidious tendency to hold sway over conduct, despite the more enlightened preaching of many of the prophets. And to the original structure of the Law there had been added, in the years

of spiritual leanness immediately preceding the coming of Jesus, a vast weight of Scribal legislation, which, in many cases, made men feel that the best way in which to ensure safety was to adopt a system of passive inaction in all questionable circumstances, so as to avoid the almost inevitable certainty of doing something wrong if they did anything at all. Ceremonial had become the most obviously reliable passport to heavenly favour, and even the proper performance of ceremonial was hedged about with so many practical difficulties that it was possible to bestow but little attention on its meaning and purpose. So full of thorns did the average man find the formal path of his own salvation that he had no time left in which to concern himself with the salvation of his neighbour. He was fully occupied in warding off his own damnation by attending to the meticulous tithing of mint and anise and cummin.

All this Jesus showed, in His own person and behaviour, was of but secondary importance in the life of the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course there must be rules; of course there must be ceremonial. But they are consecrated to the true values of the Kingdom only if the spirit comes first and the letter second. How many of us have ever stopped to picture Jesus, like any modern preacher, in the act of preparing His sermons? What did He want to say, What did His people need most to hear: How could He lead them, in their narrow, constricted lives, to lay the right emphasis on what

was essential and what was not? Incessantly the Kingdom called. It was His solemn responsibility to put before them the vision of the moral and spiritual excellence which the awful rigour of life with God demanded. How could it be done? Only by keeping before their eyes the certainty of what life with God meant for Him. Therefore He preached to them that intimacy with God which He Himself found in His moments alone on the mountain tops or in the desert places. Therefore He preached to them the supreme importance of that spirit of unselfish service which He manifested to them in His gentle, loving kindness, in His utter lack of jealousy, vengefulness, fear, in His untiring efforts to place all that He was and all that He had at the disposal of mankind, regardless of individual colour, language, creed, or position. In Jesus the Kingdom of God received its most convincing illustration. If only all men were as He was, then would that Kingdom come with power. Preaching would, perhaps, help to bring about that consummation; therefore He preached. But deeds spoke louder than words; therefore He bestirred Himself to action. In the Kingdom of God the spirit must be firm that the action might be convincing. The two halves of a man's life go together. And, as with His words and with His presence He preached the ineffable ecstasy and power of life with God, so, in His miracles, He shared that ecstasy and power with others. No other course of action would

serve to carry out the full measure of His commission.

We can never fully realize what His never-failing insistence, both by word and deed, on the nature of the Kingdom of God meant to His hearers until we take into sympathetic account the outlook of contemporary Judaism, in which, to a certain extent, Jesus shared. This outlook was almost hopeless and heartrending in its bleak pessimism about the world. In that age and in every age until the Kingdom really came—so popular opinion held—the world was in the grip of evil. Its virtual master was Satan. The Jews were not a nation of philosophers, and academic speculation never interested them. Therefore they did not stop to enquire into the logic of this dualistic conception of authority. It was sufficient for them that God would one day come into His own: how it was that human destiny had come so deeply under the guidance of the devil, unless it were through man's own disobedience in the past, they did not stop to analyze. And there can be no doubt but that Jesus' early training had, in some measure, imbued Him with the same unquestioning belief in the present supremacy of evil. His later revelation of what the Kingdom of God implied showed Him how easily this destructive hold might be broken, but, even so, He did not deny its valid existence. How, otherwise, can we explain such sentences as, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out"

(John 12:31), and the many other similar references scattered through the Gospels? Although we must not suppose, in view of Jesus' conception of the reality of the Fatherhood of God, and His many utterances that emphasized God's intimate relationship with the world —as in His touching references to the divine care which does not overlook the sparrows and the lilies of the field—that He surrendered the universe to Satan with the complete resignation of His contemporaries, yet, in His recognition of the truth that evil, in all its forms, is something opposed to the will of God, and in His personal ambition for, and trust in, the essential worth of human nature, He went far beyond them. He was more sensitive than any among whom He moved could ever be about the utter incompatibility of the goodness of God and any slight taint of human dereliction; and He was more certain than even the most sanguine and optimistic that the efforts of God, with the assistance of men, could and would bring about an overthrow of evil. The battle had to be fought and won on all of its many fronts. Sickness, mental and physical, was, like moral delinquency, the work of Satan: "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years" (with a spirit of infirmity) "to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the Sabbath?" (Luke 13:16). Satan was a real, almost visible, adversary. He was to be met with every weapon in the armoury of the spirit.

The miracle is, then, the beating back of the Kingdom of Satan by the power of God. And Jesus, consciously and willingly adopting the part of the liberator, brought new forces to the aid of man. He did not hesitate, in His own mind, to accept the responsibility, for He felt in Himself, as first in the Kingdom of God, the divine ability to carry it out; and He did not hesitate publicly to proclaim the fact that to Him had been given the supreme authority to lead the forces of righteousness: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. . . . And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? . . . And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? . . . But if I by the finger of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you" (Luke 11:17-20). Here is the frank admission of something more than the possibility—the hypothetical form of the statement is purely rhetorical—an admission of the fact that in Him the finger of God was moving to the overthrow of everything that could find no place in the economy of God's purpose. It is further worthy of note that this authority over the almost tangible forces of evil could be, to a certain extent, delegated; for the ranks needed recruiting, and the commander-in-chief needed divisional leaders; and so we find the testimony, not only of the power of the disciples, but, once more, of the assumed reality of the Prince of Darkness: "And the seventy returned with

joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in thy name. And He said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you" (Luke 10:17-19). Under such promising auspices—however the indifference and scepticism of later ages may regard them—began the onslaught that was to conquer the hold of evil and establish the Kingdom on earth. It has only very partially realized success. But the promise still holds good, and the right hand of divine assistance is still outstretched.

But, as we summarize the thoughts of these pages, let it be clearly stated that, whatever may be said in the Gospels about the extension of the power of miracle to the disciples and others, yet it is exclusively in Jesus Himself, as miracle worker, that the centre of interest lies. And for very obvious reasons. No other miracle worker ever, for a moment, thought of claiming that the power was his own. Everything was done in the name of Jesus; from Him every jot of authority was derived. He was the fountainhead, whose prerogative forever was secure. That that prerogative manifested itself in deeds of wonder that brought strength and health was no cause for amazement. Those who were blessed with His intimacy saw, as we who try to be near Him now must see, that a Jesus who did no mir-

acles, and did not expect to do any, was an unthinkable and unreal being. Was He not, according to His own affirmation, the Son of Man? Was there not, lurking ever behind His express declaration, the likeness of the Messiah? Was it not natural, therefore, that He should fulfill the traditional destiny of those great figures, and show, that every eye might see, the new powers of the Kingdom? Inconsiderable in such a manifestation might well be His temporary delegation of certain unaccustomed powers to others.

In conclusion, as we have seen, faith is the *sine qua non* of miracle. Jesus' faith is different from our faith in that it was the feeling and expression of a perfect filial consciousness. So strong was His sense of oneness with God—so vital, indeed, was the reality of that oneness—that He could perceive what the mind and will of God were, and could understand, therefore, what things can and must be done to fulfill that mind and that will. He was aware, too, that, arising out of His experience of the depths of that oneness, there came certain powers which were sufficient to accomplish those things that could and must be done, even though the manner of that accomplishment lay outside the bounds of the ordinary experience of men. We find in Jesus, therefore, a unique consciousness of the mind of God, together with a will perfectly in harmony with the will of God: and, so unprecedented is such a factor in human experience, we are utterly unable to place any arbitrary limits

as to what it is possible for such a being to accomplish. In Jesus we begin to see, vaguely perhaps, what still, to most of us, is a questionable and potential truth, the perfect dominance of mind over matter. How highly will men of future generations regard Jesus when they, in the fullness of time, have adequately learned the lesson we are dimly beginning to perceive, that faith truly has creative powers! As Leonard Hodgson puts it: "What if there walked on earth two thousand years ago One whose knowledge of the divine mind gave Him naturally that 'faith' which we strive so laboriously to acquire?" What that One did for mankind cannot be altogether beyond our reach. He was the Master, we are only students; but, although He alone could give tone to the whole everlasting symphony, we at least can struggle to learn the notes. We do not know as yet, apart from our knowledge of Jesus, what powers are resident in human nature at its highest, or to put it otherwise, to how great an extent God could use human nature at its highest to accomplish what would ordinarily be outside human achievement.

It may be that many of us to-day, who try to keep up with the developments of modern psychological research, feel the difficulty of the personal miracles less than did those of the last two generations, who were stunned by the quick and appalling progress of physical and mechanical science; for the power of mind over matter is now a demonstrable fact. But what are we to

say of the nature miracles? Is it credible, for instance, that the Son of Man stilled the storm upon the sea? The answer can be little more than an equivocation; but it is fruitful to bear in mind that the old categorical and unbending distinctions between mind and matter, or the spirit and the material, if not actually done away with, are, in the light of modern teaching of the universality of Energy, tending to appear false and arbitrary distinctions. We have seen some verification of Jesus' miracles of healing in the practice of to-day; but we have not yet plumbed the powers of such God-consciousness and faith as Jesus possessed, and hence are not in a position to determine what they may or may not do. We can only assert that Jesus, the Son of Man, Himself the embodiment of the Kingdom of Heaven, was as convinced of the power of faith over nature as He was of its power over the minds and bodies of men. It has been our contention that the miracles cannot be disregarded in any sincere study of Jesus' mature ministry, but that they must be taken seriously. Perhaps some who, because they have been unable to make the accounts of them harmonize with what they know of modern science, yielded to the temptation to discard them altogether, may be induced to rethink their verdict by the suggestion that, in the miracles, we see Jesus' attempt to show men what the coming of the Kingdom of God actually meant in human values. And if, even then, they appear to be too extraordinary for any rea-

soned belief, perhaps a careful estimate of the world as we know it to-day will not be without a certain power of persuasion. For the Kingdom of God, with all its miracles, is only, even for us in this apparently mad twentieth century, just below the horizon, if we would universally accept its one condition, obedience to the will of God. If we could picture the world as it would be with the condition fulfilled, with God's sanity the measure of every life, there would be among us very little of what we have learned to call evil. As to physical ills, a prominent doctor has recently declared in public that, excluding epidemic and surgical cases, nine-tenths of the ailments he was called upon to attend were either caused by, or seriously aggravated by, the mind of the patient. Were those minds attuned to the peace and serenity of God? As to the surgical cases, how many were caused by undue haste, by recklessness, by indifference—none of which are compatible with the will of God? If we ordered our eating, our drinking, our resting, our periods of work and play, with due regard to a balanced life, how little disease would be left among us! Even death itself—no one would want to abolish death. But death would be, if we all learned to obey the will of God, not a tortured, premature rending of soul and body, but a gradual slipping away in peace and loveliness—as it is, even now, for some of the very aged and very beautiful. There is war because some of the rulers of the world are selfish: there is

poverty and unemployment because some of the organized forces at work among us are greedy: there is sorrow because some are unfaithful: there is bitterness because some are uncharitable. And so through every verse of the dirge of civilization. But it need not be. Joan of Arc knew that the age of miracle was not passed, and a miracle—staggering in its sheer audacity—she performed. Miracles could happen to us. We stand at the close of our day and look forward, far into the future. And we see men and women, just like ourselves, living in our world. But the miracle has happened. Their faces are smiling, their bodies are sound, their lives are peaceful and serene. It is because, everywhere and always, men have heard the voice of God, and have found that it is more blessed to obey it than to disregard it. It will never be unless, and until, we admit our own inadequacy, and learn humbly to hold out our hands to that God who searches for us more eagerly and more untiringly than we ever search for Him. In Him, at the end as at the beginning, lies the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory.

CHAPTER VII

JESUS AND THE FATHER

It may quite naturally occur to some reader to ask at this point whether, in the light of what has been said, we are to suppose that Jesus regarded His mission as accomplished when once He had answered the call of ancient prophecy, when once He had fulfilled the meaning of those august titles with which the reverent imagination of men had vested that spiritual Saviour that was to be. We do not so read Christ. To be the substance of what had been foreshadowed, to stand at the end of the vista along which the eyes of hope had gazed, to provide the complete satisfaction for the prayers of the faithful, and the ultimate consummation for the longings of the devout—those indeed were high privileges. But they were not high enough. If that were all, it would have meant that human thought, in the days of man's spiritual beginnings, could have visioned divine perfection, and human feeling, in the times of that ignorance at which God winked, have found itself equal to foretelling the promises of complete revelation. There were still truths beyond any that had ever entered into the mind of Old Testament prophet or

priest. These "He that should come" must set before the hopeful generations that were to be, while at the same time He did not neglect the satisfaction of those wonderful generations that had already been.

So far Jesus has been dealt with in connection with the terms which He Himself used to express the meaning of Himself and His mission—terms that He found as readymade vessels for His preaching when He came. He did not invent them. From His childhood He had been familiar with them, and the customary interpretation of them. To Him, as to us, they are extremely important and significant. Messiah—Son of Man—the Kingdom of Heaven—what are they but centuries and continents of spiritual experience caught within one blazing phrase? They came to Him inexpressibly full of divine meanings, implications, sanctions, promises: and it was inevitable that they should influence, not only the direction of His thinking, but also the content of His thought. He must have realized—we have seen, in fact, that He did realize—that greater honour could scarcely fall to human lot than that a man should be found to fulfill such ideals as lay in those holy titles. And He knew that He did fulfill those ideals—that it was given to Him, and to Him alone, to make embodiment for ancient visions, to consummate those age-long prophecies. It would have been so easy to have stopped there. The day was short and there was much to be done. But to have stopped there would have been to

make His mission ineffective, for it would have deprived Him of the exercise of one unique prerogative of the possession of which He was profoundly conscious; and He would have been unsatisfied, incomplete. He knew that He had more to offer than any of the traditional titles suggested—great and farreaching as they were. Because of that possession He possessed the others.

It was, in fact, because of His underived, intuitive sense of Sonship with God that He realized the right to appropriate and use the highest of all that had gone before. Because of what He was, the Son, He found no qualms about laying the past under tribute. As we read the Gospels we discover no trace on His part of any effort merely to conform to a type, without adding something significant to the characterization of that type. We find no suggestion that He found confirmation regarding Himself or His work solely in what from time to time had been predicted. He did not deduce the effect of what was unique about Him from what the prophecies had promised. He is not measured by the past; He stands towards it as an interpreter. And this He could be, as no one else could be, by virtue of that element in His self-consciousness which told Him, in tones He could never deny, that what was unique about Him was that very fact of Sonship which assured a deep understanding of the meaning of the Father's plan. As Son He was one forever with the counsels of God.

There can be no reasonable doubt, from the record of many of the authenticated words of Jesus, that there is truth, in His eyes, in the thought that men might attain to a sonship, in principle somewhat like His own—that is to a close, intimate relationship with God, marked on either side by love and confidence and service. That the sense of such a relationship has not been wanting in the spiritual experience of humanity is abundantly proved by the history and confessions of the professed mystics. His own Sonship, on its practical and humanitarian side, is perhaps the basis of the certainty with which He asserts that, although life may seem to make many suggestions to the contrary, men also may be, and indeed are, sons of God. But, even so, between others and Himself there is a great gulf fixed. His Sonship was not to be confused with that of others. His was Sonship realized—in the profoundest sense intimate, an experience too great to question, or to measure in human terms. The implicit difference—implicit because it does not seem to yield easily to the rigours of human speech—was that Sonship, to Him, brought with it a tremendous sense of personal power and authority; to other men it was overladen with the thought of dependence, of filial trust and obedience. With them it tended to produce a certain lack of responsibility—mirrored for us moderns, for instance, in such lines as, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me; let me hide myself in thee"—with Him it turned to a great dynamic,

expressed in terms of the Father's business, and the necessity He felt to be up and doing to aid that Father in His work, with full knowledge that what He said and did would be well pleasing in that Father's sight.

It must have been intensely and spontaneously compelling to hear Jesus speak of "My Father." It would have sounded no more strained or unnatural than to hear a devoted young woman of to-day refer to her mother. My Father! Of course the words of Jesus have come down to us in a language which is not the Aramaic in which He commonly spoke. Some of the colour and shading have been lost in the translation. Yet men remembered how He had prayed—Abba!—Father! The spoken word, the very tone of the voice, perhaps, is recalled. My Father! The First Gospel puts that invocation into His mouth so many times. St. Luke quotes it less; and St. Mark, curiously enough, never at all. But the recorded instances are sufficient to make us realize that, to the generation of His friends and their informants and their associates, He was a man who was never weary or ashamed of owning that He stood in direct and profound relationship with the Highest. And perhaps the most observant noticed that He never said "Our Father." That phrase is not recorded as passing His lips except when He taught His disciples to pray: and, in that instance, the pronoun is intended to include all those who will make use of the prayer in common,

and does not imply that the Master associates Himself with them in their filial homage.

His sense of a peculiar and perhaps unique relationship is reflected in many passages. He tells, for instance, the story of how the wicked husbandmen seized the lord's vineyard, and refused to surrender it; and of how the lord had one final messenger, a beloved son, whom he sent at last unto them, saying, "They will reverence my son" (Mark 12:6). He implies the possession of a very special knowledge on the part of the son, a knowledge beyond that of men and angels, though inferior to that of the Father: "but of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." And, in particular, the recognition rings out from the words in Luke 10:21, "I thank Thee, O Father, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes"; on which assertion Streeter makes the comment: "To say this was, in a sense, to put Himself alongside the babes. . . . Would Christ have told others that 'to enter the Kingdom of Heaven they must become as little children,' unless He had verified the fact by personal experience? Just because He was the first and only grown man of high courage and powerful intellect to try that and no other method of approach to God, He could say, 'No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever

the Son willeth to reveal Him.' " It is quite apparent that, in the understanding of Jesus, this mutual and complete reciprocity of knowledge on the part of Father and Son is not accidental, but is inextricably bound up with their Fatherhood and Sonship. Only those who are knit together in the relationship of such a love as theirs could have so perfect a bond of sympathy.

But, even so, with all the emphasis that He placed on the uniqueness of His own experience of this relationship, it must be recognized that Jesus still considered the privilege as being within the reach of others. His filial consciousness was not self-centred. He came, in very large part, that He might expound and illustrate the principle upon which the sonship of all men to God was based. He grounded the principle, not on theory or speculation, but on His own inner experience; and it was accordingly the logical deduction from, and extension of, an assured premise. Consistently He tried to teach how that filial sense, which was realized in Himself, might, being potential in others, find universal development to its ultimate consummation—"that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:45).

The essence of the teaching force of religion is its naturalness. Generations of the Church have forgotten that. But we of to-day have especial need to remember it. The youth of this inquisitive and scientific age cannot be fed on special cases or the authority of phenomena

that are unique. What—that we may speak to them in a language they understand—are the essential elements in the relationship of a son with his father and a father with his son? Are they those which Jesus showed towards His heavenly Father? If so, are they realizable by us? Upon the conviction of our answer lies the difference between future agnosticism and Christian faith.

Probably the emotion that most human fathers would prefer to inspire in their sons is emulation. It covers so many points of relationship. It argues a certain identity, for obviously a son could not be expected to follow in his father's footsteps, or rise to the same heights of character or achievement, if there were between them no moral or spiritual likeness. It argues, too, a dynamic power of exaltation in the father, which the son may reasonably be expected to reverence, with every endeavour to make it his own. It argues a certain redeeming love, which is at the disposition of the son, to right his mistakes, to guide his selection of ideals, to sympathize and to forgive. What more worthy task can the worthy son of a worthy father know than that of aspiring to carry on his influence and to complete his work?

There was no formal or superficial relationship between Jesus and His Father: rather was there a controlling conviction of moral identity—formed in the depths of nature from which true living springs, and therefore a vital and dynamic thing. Its most significant

note is, perhaps, sounded in the recognition by Jesus of the necessity of an absolute harmony of the will, a deep underlying sense of united purpose, which could only spring from the strains of one nature, shared, perhaps, by two, but monopolized by neither. Jesus came to do the will of God. If, at any moment, that will became difficult to detect, and a divergence of emphasis was threatened, the outcome must be referred back, without prejudgment, to the original source of decision, and the result must unequivocally be accepted. Nothing but long training in that understanding could have influenced Jesus, at the moment when all His humanity was crying out for relief, to pray as He prayed in the garden: "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

And the great hope of our spiritual manhood lies in the fact that Jesus assumes that it is not impossible for the children of the earth to feel this sense of moral identity, and arrive at a state of voluntary unanimity with the will of God. He told His audience, in the Sermon on the Mount, that they could be perfect as their heavenly Father was perfect. And He assumed, further, that the measure of that perfection was likeness to Himself: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, which is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:50). Once again, it need not be supposed, as at first sight seems to be indicated, that

this implies, on Jesus' part, a sense of complete identity with men in this filial relationship with the Father. He was always the elder brother, endowed with a very special degree of privilege and authority. His attitude towards His brothers in the flesh is always one, not of condescension, but of infinite tender regard for those who, while similar in kind, were essentially different in degree. It is a regard which can be recognized in the case of almost every human family where there exists a due sense of youth and age, of responsibility and discipline, of first and last. The infant may be the brother of the son of the house, but he can never aspire to his pre-eminence.

It is significant that, in Our Lord's view, as in the view of any man who has ever lived in a truly Christian family and environment, the test, and, at the same time, the valid guarantee of sonship in the family and of loyalty to its ideals, is found in the broad social relationships of the members of the family towards the world outside. It is not once, but many times, that He points out the need for being peacemakers, for loving enemies, and praying for those that persecute, if one is truly to be acknowledged as a son of the Father which is in heaven.

Further; does a son trust his father? It all depends, the answer may be, on the moral integrity of the father. And, where that is taken for granted, there should exist a perfect trust in that father's sufficiency, a knowledge

that he is adequate to all the occasional emergencies of life. If then, as Jesus argued, God is, by His nature, moral perfection, it must be of the essence of His Fatherhood to care, and of sonship with Him to trust. Especially is this manifest when it is realized that God does not wait for His sons to call upon Him, but extends His watchful protection to compass every inarticulate sparrow that falls or lily that blooms. A son trusts his father to think of him and plan for him even though he makes no such specific request. A son is in the heart of a true father, though words pass not and distance intervenes. Modern preaching, weak at many points, is weaker nowhere more than in its neglect of the truth that God seeks us more earnestly, more patiently, and more wishfully, than we ever seek Him. The subjective schools of thought that take for their Gospel the teaching expressed so memorably by W. E. Henley, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul," bring their disciples to ruin and misery because they are teaching a religious untruth. If I trust my Father, He and I together are masters of my fate and captains of my soul. And the spiritual history of mankind bears out the fact that no one has ever gone very far along the path of mystic happiness who has not realized that the Hound of Heaven is a true and dynamic experience. God is always searching, ready to grasp the outstretched hand of weariness, loneliness, or distress.

That Jesus Himself realized that the Father knew the

abiding value of what He had done; that that Father recognized its future meaning; that it had, in fact, been, in part, the Father's hand that had done the works, is obvious from numberless passages of undoubted authenticity. Trust in the insight, the understanding, the approval, of the Highest is implicit in practically every God-ward expression of His life. And nowhere more than at that awful moment when life is categorically appraised—the moment of imminent death. It was not as a sudden access of forced confidence, born of humiliation and despair, but as the climax of a long, proudly trusting life that that moment prompted Jesus on the cross to cry, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

If humanity does not trust its Father God it is not because of lack of example or exhortation. How often does Jesus tell us that we are the kings of creation, and therefore of more account than the inarticulate products of nature! How definitely does He say that the Heavenly Father knows that we have need; with the inevitable implication that He is able and willing to supply that need! He wants men to trust as He trusts, to share responsibility as He shares responsibility, to look for sympathy and help as He looks for sympathy and help, to enter in and be saved as He entered in and knew happiness. Only so, He seems to say, is man's life fully caught up into the life of God.

Which thought leads to the further consideration

that the Father is just. On no other terms would a perfect relationship be possible. An earthly son does not respect a father who is weak and sentimental, or vengeful and unbending. In such a relationship there must be a certain pliability, a true and well-founded reciprocity. The conception of the justice of God is implicit in the thought of the sufficiency of God, and plays a major part in any estimate of the moral character of God. It is not enough that we expect a portion of food in return for the work we have done, as one of our sons may earn his dinner by chopping the firewood. The thinking man, and, therefore, the religious man, has needs beyond food. He must know that his highest efforts have not been in vain. He must be assured that there is a fulfillment, somewhere, somehow, to crown each honest enterprise, an awakening for every worthy dream, an answer to every truthful question. Few men want God to be a charlatan or a moron. They want to receive what they deserve, and to feel that business principles—justice tempered, perhaps, with consideration—are the rule even in their dealings with the Highest. Therefore Jesus, even in His pattern prayer, is at pains to point out that, without reciprocity, little can be expected. Our debts in Heaven are forgiven if we forgive our debtors on earth. We must be merciful even as our Father also is merciful. Such a provision is a necessity if the moral character of God is to be vindicated.

And yet, as Portia pointed out long ago, there is one advocate before whom even justice itself is dumb. The heart of the world goes out to Tess, and the pity of the world weeps for Mary Stuart and Joan of Arc. Much more fully does a parent's love overflow in the infinite personal call of flesh to flesh. And more fully still does the love of the God of Jesus respond to the intimate appeal of spirit to spirit. Love will always be illogical. It is never expressed with due regard to proportion. It overlooks deserts. It overrides fidelity. And, as God's relationship with man is one of love, the distinguishing attribute of Fatherhood, it is not unnatural that that relationship should be fraught with the element of the unexpected, the incalculable. On a basis of simple justice spiritual progress would be impossible; with love to overcome the inertia, and to provide the margin of energy for further action, there are still to be found stepping stones across the flood of destiny.

Very few men who ever lived could face the mystery of the future unmoved and unafraid were it not for the recognition of this unorthodox quality in God. He is no respecter of persons. He sends His rain on the just and on the unjust. The father waits with the outstretched hands of blessing even for the prodigal. There is no antecedent or subsequent discrimination. The wealth of God's loving understanding—to which sometimes we apply the term forgiveness—is sufficient to make every man rich. And, as Jesus Himself counted

upon the moral support and spiritual sympathy of God to help Him in any moment of fancied inadequacy, so He insisted that the same support and the same sympathy were at the disposal of every needy soul. Its distinguishing mark is not a nicely balanced reciprocity, but a degree of liberality, of spontaneity and freedom, wholly incommensurate with the repentant petition of the suppliant. Jesus points out, with considerable vigour, that, if we who are evil know how to give good gifts unto our children, much more will the Father which is in Heaven give good gifts unto them that ask Him. This is consonant with the whole principle of the father-son relationship. A wise father does not exact an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth. He overcomes the evil by an overwhelming display of good.

For, after all, a father does know best. He anticipates the needs of his children. He makes plans to fulfill them. Jesus never seemed to doubt but that the solution of every problem, even in the greatest emergency, had been foreseen by God. Nothing could catch Him unaware, unprepared. And men must feel it too. No temptation too strong to withstand, no effort too great to find accomplishment, no riddle too difficult to yield an answer. This is not what the world might brand as fatalism or even predestination. Its quality lies in the free moral nature of God, which is eternally being mediated to men. The fact that that nature is both free and moral means that cause and effect are mutually

bound together. A man, being spiritually in the image of God, cannot embark on any course of action which is incapable of culmination. If he can embark so can he disembark. One who knows anything of the life of God can never be caught inextricably in the clutch of circumstance.

And so, to make His children always conscious of eternal values, the Father surrounds them with lasting evidences of what is beautiful and true and good. All they need to do is to look through nature, through the wonders of the physical universe, through the lives of saints and martyrs and heroes, through the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace, into the Father's face. Jesus saw the beauty of God in the lilies of the field, the truth of God in the seed cast by the sower, the love of God in the helplessness of a flock of sparrows, the dignity of God in the transfigured lives of Peter and John. This intuition is the power of sacramentalism. To the believer no fact of existence is inarticulate. Each one speaks directly of God's ineffable grandeur, or, by denial, suggests God's immeasurable care. So, in one majestic aspect of His being, Jesus approached God. It is, in kind, exactly the same as the approach of an understanding earthly child to the father who is the head of the household. These new books, this rare picture, this carefully planned vacation, this gathering of friends—what do they really mean but the thoughtful provision of one who wishes, through

their influence, to be remembered as a helpful and far-seeing benefactor?

So, in any truly sacramental approach to reality, it is the father—"the author and giver of all good things"—who, in gratitude and worship, is remembered. Otherwise sacramentalism has no justification. If it be not a medium through which is apparent the personality of God, a personality vibrant and individual, it is nothing. And it would seem natural, from all Jesus said and did and was, that nothing of the material world touched Him save in terms of spiritual meaning. The reference He made was always to the Father on high who "did the works."

But this habit of reference necessitated still another habit—that of meditation. This is overlooked by many even of our professed sacramentalists. The power of the sacramental is fully realized only by those who learn, not so much to withdraw from something, such as work or the crowded motley of the world, as into something, which can be described best as the Presence. The essence of the father-son relationship lies in the realized fellowship or communion; and this is most perfectly to be consummated in that stillness where the sounds of earth are excluded. To Jesus this need of solitariness was felt as the condition of meeting with the great reality—which is the mystical apprehension of God. That is doubtless why He withdrew Himself in the deserts and prayed; why, in the morning, a great

while before day, He rose up and went out. The human analogy once more holds good. A son does not readily yield himself to that intimate intercourse which some fathers know how to foster, if there be strangers present, or the surroundings are noisy and confused, or the attention is fixed on practical and transient issues. To read the page of Destiny's album aright there must be peace and quiet and complete sympathy. Even the intuition of the greatest early prophet of them all was rendered void by the wind and the crackling of the fire and the grumbling of the earthquake. The voice that outmatched the turmoil was a still small voice. And the world was very quiet for it to be heard. So we draw near to the Father, as Jesus drew near to the Father, when the diapason of humanity, for the moment, is muted. True mysticism is not an unwholesome subjective brooding; it is the consciousness of a true reciprocity between what is outside and what is inside, developed under conditions of complete freedom from everything that may interfere and distract.

To the expression of the consciousness of this reciprocity between the Father and mankind both Jesus and ourselves give the name of prayer. Prayer is, in religion, what association and converse are in friendship. Therein lies its supreme necessity—in fact, its inevitability. For, where we are in touch with a personality whom we can neither see nor hear nor feel, and yet a personality which is linked, in some inscrutable way,

with the deepest and most responsive fibres of our being, it is natural that we should make the fullest use of the only means of communication placed within our power. Prayer, in our approach to God, has to take the place of the handshake of friendship, the glance of understanding, the word of sympathy and comfort. Therefore prayer has to be very compelling, very comprehensive, "the exercise of the whole man." It can cause us no surprise, under these conditions, that Jesus spoke so often of prayer. It should cause us surprise that so many men and women feel that the privilege of prayer need not be developed. Such men and women cannot really believe. If they did, they would, at least sometimes, crave that communion with God which prayer, in one form or another, alone makes possible. To the true believer not to pray is an unthinkable thing —as unthinkable as that life should be without the give and take of speech, or without what only true friendship provides, the boon of articulate silences.

Jesus began prayer, as He began all else, with God. "Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come." Like the great prophet, He was filled with the thought of the splendour of God, the holiness and the might of God. This holiness and might expressed itself in countless mercies, in beauties of nature, in kindnesses, forgivenesses, tenderness to man. Therefore man offers himself in gratitude and adoration. As Jesus began prayer with God, He also began prayer with giving. In any

relationship there must be two factors, the giving and the taking. And prayer must both ask and offer, for vital fellowship demands both. The reciprocity, the harmony, is broken alike by the pride which will not ask and the selfishness which will not give. And so man, immersed in the strength and glory of this fellowship, rises to his heights to play his part. And, as he cannot ever give enough to compensate for what he receives, he humbly confesses his inadequacy and his appreciation in the devotion of thanksgiving.

As a true son towards his human father, Jesus is almost painfully conscious of the goodness of God. How can a son, with the fullest and highest intentions in the world, ever repay? His powers are not sufficient, his vision is restricted. But he knows that the father has been very lavish, very generous; and, from the bottom of his heart, he says, "Thank you." There lies, in those words, more than a mere recognition of the father's greatness, and appreciation for his bounty. There lies the touch of gracefulness essential to true fellowship, the gracefulness which measures opportunity and achievement, intention and result, the whole proportion of the structure of love. An understanding of grace is, after all, never more than a study in symmetry. How would human intercourse be possible where good-will is merely taken for granted and never acknowledged? And, what is far more important, how would intercourse between human and divine be pos-

sible where the human element is always the recipient, and the divine element always the benefactor? It is with the true relationship in mind that Jesus made it His custom to give thanks, as at the feeding of the multitude, and the institution of the Supper—"when He had given thanks." It is with this true relationship in mind that His followers, throughout the ages, will remember, first of all, the bounty of God, and will give thanks for "the loving kindness of the Lord."

It is the prerogative of sonship, also, that it shall make petition of fatherhood. And this is no more natural and acceptable in the earthly sphere than it is in that sphere which the mystics call other-worldly. The Gospels are full of insistence upon the need for, and reasonableness of, asking. And the ground of confidence upon which we ask, the assurance that the prayer will receive an answer, is the fact that God is Father. How essential an element in childhood—inarticulate, perhaps, and unconscious, but vitally real—is the thought that the parent will give this day the daily bread. There is nothing presumptuous, nothing extraordinary, in the expectation. The son takes his subsistence for granted: he makes petition only when he wants to point out that he is hungry. And he makes petition, not as asking some extravagant favour, but as merely putting into words an assumption that lies at the very root of the nature of the relationship. In our own prayer we should ask so much more freely if only we

realized that that privilege is part of our heritage as sons of God—provided we ask nothing that is purely selfish or patently self-contradictory. Hardly anything, as most of us know from our own experience, so disrupts fellowship as an attitude of pride that will not receive, or a state of self-sufficiency that will not regard the giving as desirable. For that reason we must use all care to see that each and every petition is grounded in, and explained by, the conditions of the personal relationship between the father and son. Love which does not ask is lacking in trust and naturalness, and is, therefore, under restraint. And, furthermore, to assume that love will provide without the asking is to reduce God's giving to the bestowal of a favour that is consistently taken for granted. The power to give and the capacity to ask are among the sweetest elements in any intimate relationship, as any true lover knows. It might be said, without exaggeration, that no intimate relationship can ever exist if the privilege of petition is never exercised.

But the due limitations of the father's power must always be recognized. When a child cries for the moon no parent ever feels lacking in the essentials of parenthood if the gift is denied. Jesus' prayer to the Father always remained within the legitimate limits of Sonship. He asked for nothing that it was not proper, possible, and permissible for the Father to grant. And it was the Father's judgment, not the Son's, that dictated the answer. In this He sets an example which the ages

of prayer have been very reluctant to follow. How much of the human approach to God in petition is improper, impossible, and impermissible! There is a natural and there is a spiritual body, wrote St. Paul. There is a physical realm and there is a spiritual realm. And prayer is a spiritual function. And God is a spiritual Father. We must observe the implied boundaries. We can hardly expect a spiritual influence to affect a natural condition to the extent of bringing to pass a physical miracle. We can pray to God that He will so impress the sense of His consoling presence on the consciousness of a sick man that the consequent condition of restfulness and peace may healthfully affect his physical organism. But we cannot consistently pray to God that He will modify the laws of cause and effect, by which the universe is ordered, so that blood will cease to flow immediately from a wound, or a body, falling from a height in obedience to the law of gravitation, will hang suspended in midair. We cannot invite Him to countenance physical chaos in order to gratify a personal whim or many personal whims. We forget sometimes that, as well as sharing in the nature of the supreme spiritual being, we are also part of inorganic creation, and obedient, therefore, to the laws that have been laid down to govern that creation. We cannot stultify His great work of order by demanding that we be treated otherwise than as a stone or a drop of water or the leaf of a tree is treated; except in one particular—which is the

prerogative of our spiritual nature. A stone, a drop of water, a leaf, falls to the ground, and lies inert and defenceless. We are never defenceless. We can rise above every physical accident by the grace that is given us to pray and be heard. We can be strengthened and comforted. We can be eased and refreshed. We can be aflame with the spirit that transcends all the laws of earth—and no pain, no parting, no death, can affect the imperishable glory in us which is what we share with that God who is spiritually our Father in Heaven.

But, that the heart of the relationship may be preserved, the son must be able to look the father straight in the eyes. The prodigal knew that; and, with the matured wisdom of aged youth, he decided to go to his father and say that he had sinned, and that he was no more worthy to be called a son. Then, whatever might be the storm, he knew that he could stand upright. Sonship can never be perfectly experienced where sin enters as a divisive factor, or when the son is not seeking to be in entire conformity with the father's will. Someone has described the state of sin as "living in a far country." Many of us think of sin as alienation from God. To bridge the gap, to heal the breach, it is necessary that the barrier be broken down, the blind eyes opened, so that the vision of God may be clear. With downcast gaze and hanging head the son comes into the father's presence. What shall he do to win back the old confidence, resume the old relationship? There is nothing

that he can do save own that he was wrong, and hold out his hand for the clasp of forgiveness.

Jesus had nothing to confess. His whole life was a conscious and convincing effort to keep within the current of His Father's will. But He knew that His less inspired brothers and sisters would sometimes allow the influence of that will to be weakened. To be sure of the consideration they craved, when they returned to their better selves, they must be willing to say that it had indeed been so. "Forgive us our trespasses." True prayer is impossible without this antecedent preparation—for true prayer is, in its essence, little more than the acknowledgment of a perfect harmony. The brother was lost and is found; was dead and is alive again.

And so we come to the crowning act of the family relationship—the rendering of all that is best in the son unequivocally and wholeheartedly to the father. A place for the homage of this act must, therefore, be found in prayer, when the Son of God gives all that he is or can ever be to Him whose nature it is to hope only for the highest. And, as it is not expected in a son that his offering to the father will be in terms that are practical and material, so the offering to God is the tribute of those inner and personal qualities which, refined in the fire of love, make loyalty and reverence and devotion. A true son does not give what he has; he gives what he is. This is so on earth; it is so, likewise, in

those spiritual realms in which is acknowledged solely the Fatherhood of God.

Worship, therefore, becomes, as it was to Jesus, a supreme act of identification, where the highest calls to and meets the highest. It is the final witness of the perfected relationship in which men stand to God. It is the sublimation of mutual spiritual experience. It may not have been that Jesus ever consciously betook Himself to worship. His unanimity with the Father was so complete that there was no barrier of discord for Him to overcome. His whole life was an act of worship, for it was dictated by the sense of a compelling kinship which rendered everything outside its pale insignificant and ineffectual. The feeling of oneness with the Father, active within Him, as we have seen, from His earliest years, was the eternal spirit of His prayer —the feeling which, He implies to us, we must all achieve before we can even hope to worship in sincerity and truth.

There is one final consideration. Sonship, however keenly felt as a personal relationship with God, must not be regarded as having exhausted its meaning and content when once that personal relationship is established. To be worthy of true sonship assumes that all the values of altruism, of friendship, of sacrifice, of service, have been fulfilled. And it assumes, further, that the individual sense of sonship is the ground of confidence that others, too, can be the sons of God. It was

so with Jesus. The very naturalness of His relation to the Father seemed to place that relation within the reach of every human soul, and the sublime beauty of what it represented made the possessor burn with the desire to share the gift with others. Moreover, so strange was the paradox of God, a man did not seem able to obtain that gift himself unless he was burning with the desire to share it with others. The earthly analogy once more rings true. A father does not love his son the more if that son is entirely wrapped up in himself. He wants the son to welcome his companions to the beauty of the home, to give them something of his own friendship and affection, to spread the mutual joy of understanding as widely as possible. Only so will the boy develop; only so will the father feel that his task has been well done.

Jesus makes the sense of sonship the measure of our dealings with men, and the aspect under which we should view our relationship with them. Here is the genesis of the missionary movement, the criterion of social service, the birth of evangelism, and the sanction of philanthropy and charity. Whenever honestly expressed, all these impulses find their justification in the desire that, through one individual, others may learn to be the sons of the Highest. In this there lies a purpose which knows no limit. For the Godward striving of the son can conceive of no end to its efforts save the creation of a universal family of the Father. That is why

we speak oftentimes of Jesus' Gospel as a social Gospel. It was social in the sense that, according to His teaching and practice, no man could ever come to God alone. The warmth of his reception was due, in final measure, to the company of those he brought with him—for it would not seem that a son could ever think very highly of his father's home if he closed its doors to his friends, and reserved its silence only for himself.

CHAPTER VIII

LEGALIST OR MORALIST?

THERE is a suggestion of an answer, perhaps, in what has just been said, to one of the most significant and persistent criticisms of the teaching of Jesus—the criticism that His conception of morality appears to be so individualistic, so absorbed with the elements of a man's own segregated soul, that it is inadequate as a social Gospel, and incapable of application to any considerations arising out of political, economic, or national life. Jesus, we are told, was an interpreter of the mind of God. As He said Himself, He was a way. But, even when that way has been duly followed, and the interpretation brought out into the daylight, are we at all clear as to the mind of God on current human issues? What, for instance, is the mind of God about peace and war, marriage and divorce, capital and labour, birth control and eugenics, education, science, communism, and capital punishment? The mind of God is obviously definite in its desire that the individual shall love the Father and do his best by his neighbour; but that cannot be all. There are vital and tremendous questions to be faced daily by each of us which are

almost impersonal in their scope. What does Jesus teach us to do and to think about them?

The answer must be referred, once more, to the index of the family life. It is inconceivable that Jesus could have taught a Gospel of sonship with the Father—a sonship in which, as we have seen, all men potentially share—and yet have taught individualism. His ethic contemplates the Kingdom, and cannot be considered apart from that ideal. Therefore its outlook, from the beginning, is, and must be, social. If it oftentimes seems impracticable, in the rough and tumble of the world, it is because it takes its colour from the thought of the life of the sons of God in the Kingdom of their Father. Therein is where, to the ethic, is added the note of religion, which is antecedent to, and implicit in, the thought of a personal relationship, spreading out through the common life of all who are to be considered brothers and sisters in the Father's household.

And so, a further question forces itself upon us. We must ask what actually are the implications of Jesus' teaching of fatherhood and sonship in terms of ordinary living. In what precise ways does the religious conviction pass over into that which is social and ethical? What, as a matter of fact, are the bearings of this conviction upon conduct and behaviour?

It has been consistently emphasized that the first approach to an understanding of the mind of Jesus must be made through an appreciation of the factors

which entered into, and moulded, His experiences as a child, a youth, a man, in the variegated Palestine of the first century. And, as we try to reconstruct the atmosphere of that time and place and environment, the shadow of one all-important consideration falls immediately across our path. That consideration is the omnipotence and omnipresence of the Law—the Torah —which would, from the beginning, have been about His footsteps and about His bed. By the precepts of the Torah His simple and devout Galilean home was governed. To the study of the Law the major part of His synagogue schooling turned Him. It was the subject of His reading, His conversation, His meditation. About the provisions of the Law, when the day's work was done, men debated in the streets and the village marketplace. Often, as He walked in the evening, He must have stopped and listened, both hearing, perhaps, and asking them questions. Invisibly the sacred book directed the tenor of corporate and personal life. The Law was everywhere, always, everything.

To modern eyes, this regard for an all-pervasive system of commands, such as the Torah attempted to supply and fulfill, may seem little short of fanatical. Perhaps it was. But, without undue cynicism, it might be remarked that it is the kind of fanaticism by the possession of a degree of which the modern world might very well be benefited, especially if we could

make our own the motive which led to its enthronement. Briefly, the supreme interest of those Jews among whom Jesus was born was a longing for righteousness. Righteousness was, to the Hebrew of that age, what truth and beauty were to the Periclean Greek, or law and order to the Roman of the Republic. It was not only an ideal that stood at the end of every vista; it was a subjective call to search diligently until the treasure was found, a fount of passion which rendered all else inconsiderable and barren. The true Jew did not set his heart on riches, on power, or even freedom; the dynamic motive of his being was to know and to do God's will—surely the purest and most magnificent urge that ever actuated men's hearts. From that search no ulterior interest could turn him aside, and from the vision of its attainment no clouds of this earthly life could entirely separate him. And if, in our quibbling way, we were to ask him how that will could be known, or where it was to be found, the Jew's answer was clear and direct and convincing. Before him lay the five books ascribed to Moses; and above them was inscribed the motto: "This is the way, walk ye in it." There was need of nothing further. A man had but to read and obey. The duty of his life was thus summed up; and the directions by which that duty was meticulously to be carried out were thus laid down. The Law was the revealed will of God. Its provisions were known, obvious and intelligible. And there could be

no conflict of duties, no misunderstanding of principles, no deviations in practice. For, if a man would be righteous, a guide book, complete in every detail, lay open to his hand. Obedience to the Law—as it was read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested—and righteousness were identical.

It is not unfair to mention, as an analogy among Christians, the attitude of the devout Roman Catholic towards the authority of the Church, which, to the eyes of belief, takes care of the whole problem of human salvation in return for complete and unquestioning obedience; and, among the followers of other religions, the true disciples of Islam, to whom the will of Allah, once revealed, is the criterion of success on earth and happiness in heaven. This trend of mind is not to be despised or disregarded. The heart of humanity longs for certainty; the soul of humanity can never suppress its upward striving. What shall we do to be saved? And the tired consciousness of the sons of men sinks back, time and again, into the deep consolation of any answer that promises relief and release—even though they lie merely in the cold casket of a book of rules.

The Jew's answer was quite definite, and entirely free from sophistication and equivocation. Man's duty was obvious, lying, as it did, in explicit, unquestioning obedience to laws which ranged over the whole field of life. Duty was everything; man's own predilections nothing. Duty sent out the call; man had only to re-

spond. Again and again, in the history of Israel, the strength of character founded on this principle proved to be the nation's salvation. It was a concept of righteousness which produced, at its best, supreme moral hardihood and determination, such as must be developed by any farreaching and majestic discipline in which the pupil wholeheartedly acquiesces. If the absolute integrity of the final authority is taken for granted, absolute obedience is merely a matter of sanctified common sense.

From one standpoint, the answer simplified the whole moral problem, as may easily be imagined; for morality ceased to be anything more than ethical compliance. But, from another standpoint, it created a moral situation so complex that the behaviouristic difficulties of Israel have become a byword to succeeding generations. That this was inevitable may easily be understood when anyone stops to realize that no law, however comprehensive, can conceivably cover the whole gamut of life's occasions. There never really exist, in human affairs, two identical circumstances: for there never exist two identical persons, and it is always the personal equation that gives meaning and content to the process of events. It is faulty logic to argue the conduct of one man in any given situation from the conduct of another man in a similar situation; for the two men are not the same man. Moreover, even if the influence of this personal equation is minimized until it is virtually negli-

gible, it is hopeless to suppose that any body of law can ever take into account all the possible practical happenings that may enter into any individual's existence. This is what, at last, the Jewish thinker discovered. The precepts of the original Law, numerous as they were, touched scarcely more than the fringe of life's conditions, and consequently were always proving themselves inadequate in given instances. Righteousness became a patchwork affair; and the good Jews were frequently in grave doubt as to where to turn, or what to do, to earn their peace of mind and conscience.

Consequently, as the years passed, enactments began to grow and multiply. This could hardly be otherwise under any legalistic conception of righteousness. Law breeds law; and, in the course of time, its regulations governed everything from the ritual of worship to the minutiae of washing and cooking. Law breeds law; it also breeds lawyers, and a new element in the complicated drama appeared upon the scene in the person of the Scribes, whose business it was to interpret, apply, and, when it was lacking, provide the Law. Something of the resulting confusion may be appreciated by any automobile driver to-day who, in the course of his journey, has occasion to negotiate several towns, in each of which the traffic regulations are different, and sometimes contradictory. The Scribes did not agree among themselves. Casuistry was an ever-present menace. And, to many a devout Jew, righteousness

seemed dearly bought and paid for at the price of never ending care and ceaseless anxiety.

It is only fair to point out that modern Jewish scholars protest against the common Christian interpretation of the situation as prejudiced, especially when writers on the subject of Jesus and His times assume that the volume of the oral Law had, in His days, grown to the gigantic proportions it reached subsequently. These critics assert that a life governed by the Law that Jesus knew was a kindlier, more humane, and more spiritual thing than Christianity has usually represented. This is doubtless true, and care should be taken to make the necessary qualifications in any discussion of the subject. It is not fair to charge the fathers of Jesus' time with the follies their sons committed in later years. But, although, by the end of the first generation of the Christian era, the oral Law had not usurped an authority which, as sometimes happened afterwards, placed it on an equality with, if not in a position of supremacy over, the original Law, yet it is obvious to any reader of the Gospels that it was burdensome enough, with its meticulous and pettifogging discipline. Jesus and St. Paul provided sufficient evidence, of the most direct nature, that righteousness had become to many, if not to most, a matter of legal technicality. That is sufficient for our present consideration. The appalling growth of legal authority in later days is another, and a profoundly distressing, story.

And now we turn to an estimate of Jesus' own conception of, and attitude towards, the Law. The subject is clouded with a certain amount of doubt, because of our ignorance of the precise strength of the hold of the Law among the worldly people with whom He associated. But, from what we can infer from His general approach to legalism, we can paint a picture, that is probably fairly accurate, of the place that it held in His plan of salvation.

It has often been assumed that Jesus wished entirely to set aside and abrogate the Mosaic Law. But probably no historic judgment is more incorrect. As a devout Jew, He was bred under the shelter of the Law. To Him, as to His fellows, the Law was the inspired word of God; and He accepted it, as it was presented to Him in its five books, hedged about with its armoury of divine sanctions, for none other than the expression of the supreme will of God, revealing eternally God's moral purpose. Hence He constantly appealed to its provisions, for, to Him, those provisions were conclusive, and permitted of no further argument. It was, therefore, with a sense of complete authority that He could say: "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honour thy father and thy mother" (Mark 10:19), and, even more significantly: "Go thy way; show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses com-

manded, for a testimony unto them" (Mark 1:44). The record of the Gospels cannot possibly be construed so as to make it appear that He was regarded as demonstrably disloyal to the Law, although, on occasion, as notably in connection with His treatment of the Sabbath, He was severely criticized. It is worthy of note that, while the authorities, upon His examination after His arrest, made every possible effort to prove that He had foretold the destruction of the Temple (Mark 14:55-58), they never made the slightest reference to an indictment that would have been far more effectively damning, had they been able to substantiate it—His revolutionary attitude towards the ancient Law. Here, where, had it been true, there would have been the loudest clamour, there is complete silence. Jesus was not an apostate nor an iconoclast in these matters, and His contemporaries never apparently considered that He was. We must conclude that He was consistently faithful in maintaining, in life and teaching, what the Law required. As Klausner, who looks at Him with Jewish eyes, observes, "It is manifest that Jesus remained a Jew in His positive attitude to the Law generally" ("Jesus of Nazareth," p. 367).

It is not impossible, in fact, that it was His excessive jealousy for the integrity of the Law that, paradoxically enough, gave rise to many of the attacks of His enemies; for, in His zeal to keep its authority intact and its significance undiminished, He did launch the fire of His

criticism, not upon the Law as such, but upon the many later accretions to the Law, and more especially upon the large mass of teaching and enactment that had to deal with the careful details of ceremony, purification, and ritual righteousness. These oral accretions were not, strictly speaking, authoritative; and Jesus outspokenly rejected them in no uncertain language. But to do so was not a particularly dangerous proceeding, for there would have been a large number of His associates who, weary to death of a legalism which made the concerns of daily life a practically intolerable bore, would have agreed with Him, and, doubtless, in moments of secret expansion, did so. The majestic figure of the primitive Law must, He implied, be cleared of those trappings that had been pinned upon it by the Scribes and Pharisees. Nothing must be allowed to veil its grandeur or distort its meaning. That is the ground of His scathing rebuke to the legalists in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. The hypocrites tithed mint and anise and cummin, but left undone the weightier matters of the Law? "Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. And He said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your tradition" (Mark 7:8-9).

And yet, recognizing, as we must, that Jesus kept the Law, and taught other men to keep it, it is still obvious that He had a very revolutionary effect upon men's estimate of it and regard for it. What that revolutionary

effect was, and how it came about, is really the crucial point in any discussion of Jesus as legalist or moralist. What is there in His teaching that links the old Law with the new Christian ethic? How far can an emphasis on an implicit obedience to a code be safely modified so as to allow room for the working of the grace of God? Was Jesus an opportunist? Can it be doubted but that He was destined to set the Law, as then understood, aside for vast numbers who, in the discontent with law as a governing system of life, appealed to Him then, as they appeal to Him now? And, finally, did St. Paul, the champion of liberty from the Law, introduce into the thought of Christendom a conviction wholly unrelated to the mind of Jesus, or can we see the implications of what later developed in the words that Jesus actually spoke and the deeds He actually did?

Three considerations may help as guides to an answer. In the first place it is helpful to clarify the discussion by a further study of the underlying purpose of the Law.

To most thinking people the Law is, as it was to St. Paul, a schoolmaster. That is to say, it is a means to an end. The purpose of the ideal schoolmaster is obviously that there shall be no need of further schoolmasters. He has inculcated in the student so strong a passion for knowledge, and has told him so delicately how that passion may be fulfilled, that the child requires no further discipline, but reaps his wisdom as readily and as

easily and as delightfully as he draws his breath. That is one concept of the Law. It is meant to open to our gaze vistas where Law is superseded. This, as will be seen later, was the inevitable outcome of Jesus' view. But His was not the only possible view. In a discerning chapter on Jesus and the Law, Dr. Easton has shown how dangerously near the Jew came to asserting that the Law's validity is resident in itself—that it defines life's obligations, and they require no further reference. The authority of the Law lies in the fact that "it is written." God has spoken; man will perforce obey. This is the attitude of the legalist, as we can tell from many among us who are legalists to-day.

The attitude is, of course, defensible enough. If God has said all that He has to say in the Law, then man has no alternative but to obey. The will of God is to us, as it was to Jesus, always the ultimate court of appeal. "Thy will be done." But, at the same time, no one could logically question the fact that Jesus refused to regard the Law, or obedience to the Law, as ends in themselves. This was because the Law could never represent the whole expression of the will of God. It could, in fact, never represent even the most perfect and consummate elements in that will. To Jesus there was something else—something which, while it did not detract from the majesty and effectiveness of what the Law was, still added something higher and nobler to atone for its deficiencies. The Law was good; but still

He longed to show His friends "a more excellent way." "I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. . . . Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:43, 45, 48).

This does not read like a sentence from the Law! Here love has, as its purpose, the fashioning of the sons of God, the reproduction of the character of Him who is Father. This is a very dynamic, constructive characterization of love—love in the truest and loveliest Christian sense. Love was, of course, enjoined by the Law, but it was a different kind of love. Here is the love that adventures forth, in the quest of those worthy of sonship in the Father's household. Sometimes, to make the stranger feel at home, all points of purely formal etiquette must be brushed aside. Sometimes, to keep that stranger ever at his ease, some of the nicer demands of social usage must be entirely abrogated. The motive and the purpose must be the judge. The idea of sonship dominates—but even sons do not all know the same discipline.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the Law had paved the way for this new morality. Those of us whose attention is preoccupied with its meticulousness, forget that it had a breadth of scope, in certain connec-

tions, which sound more Christian than Jewish. For example, "the Summary" of the Law was probably not original with Jesus. According to the account in Luke, it is put into the mouth of the interrogator: "What is written in the Law? How readest thou? And he" (the lawyer) "answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:26, 27). Jesus' comment was one of warm approval and endorsement, conditioned only by His implied criticism of the questioner's understanding of the word "neighbour," which, for his benefit, He attempted to describe in the parable of the Good Samaritan. But, even so, the lawyer, who, as a good Jew, restricted his ethical vision to the horizon of the Law, approaches very closely to Our Lord's own teaching. It is quite possible that Jesus said very little that a contemporary scribe or Pharisee might not have said. The book of Deuteronomy assures its readers that all those who did cleave unto the Lord their God were alive, every one; and Leviticus definitely commands, "Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18). Rabbi Hillel is quoted as making this reply to a would-be follower: "What is unpleasing to thee, do not to thy fellow; this is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary; go and learn it."

The basic difference between this altruistic attitude of the Old Testament and that of the Gospels is a racial one. The Jew is urged not to bear any grudge against "the children of thy people." He is told nothing of the sort, apparently, as to the children of any other people. To Jesus, Jew and Samaritan were of equal deserts; to Paul, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, were to share on the same footing in the tender mercies of God. Jesus, as was His custom in dealing with questions that sought to impale Him upon the point of a controversy, in His reply to the lawyer enunciates a spiritual principle—that law has in mind the total relationship of man and God, and man and man. The purpose of this principle is a creation of the good which is beyond the Law and greater than the Law—nothing less than the all-absorbing fellowship of Father and sons, and the treatment of all men, without discrimination, in accordance with the essentials of that fellowship. This is not occasionally to rise to the insight that love is the ideal fulfillment of the Law; it is resolutely to alter the whole character of law. For, obviously, as Paul saw, he who has become the Son of God does not need the detailed regimen of law and precept. The truly filial life is distinguished, not so much by the will to obey, as by the love which seeks to correspond to the will of the Father. The life of sonship implies the freedom of those who are trusted, and the elimination of the element of restraint. "As many as are led by the spirit of God, those are sons

of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:14, 15). Jesus, in short, virtually abrogated the Law, not by challenging the validity of its precepts, or by questioning its divine origin, but by insisting upon the fact of the essential value of a Fatherhood and sonship, offered without stint to all those everywhere who loved the will of God warmly enough to attempt to render it effective in universal human life. The Law, in its strict legalistic sense, still remains implicit because the rules of the family must be kept intact in order that, in the divine household, there may be harmony and unanimity. But the rules are only secondary; the spirit of the whole is what matters—the atmosphere that breathes God's will, and God's will alone. As Rufus Jones describes it, when he speaks of Brother Lawrence, supremely happy in the brotherhood kitchen: "He feels no need for special times of organized and directed religious devotions, for his whole life in its ordinary round of toil and duty had become a perennial practice of the Presence of God, a joyous fusion of eternity and time."

In the second place, it is extremely important to recognize that Jesus was distinguished from His predecessors and contemporaries by the extraordinary value He attached to the motive of an action. It was, to Him, the motive that made righteousness. Once more, how-

ever, we must be fair to the Scribes and Pharisees. The best of them would have agreed wholeheartedly that it is the motive which determines the quality of obedience, and would have condemned externalism, opportunism, individualism, as strenuously as Jesus did. But that is not to say that they would have found satisfaction in the same quality of motive as He did. They would never have endangered the Law; their insistence would have been on the value of the motive of implicit obedience to it. The emphasis would still have remained on the supreme importance of practising each and every one of its precepts. The question that was implied by Jesus was as to the ethical value of this implicit and unreasoning motive of obedience. Was morality a mechanical or spiritual phenomenon? Did it call upon any other element in human nature than the power of blind acquiescence in the temper of a command?

Jesus most emphatically taught that it did. In all that He said on the subject there is the continual insistence on principle, pushed sometimes to a point that is not careful of consequence. And considerations of principle cannot be categorically taught: they demand a certain exercise of individual judgment. The implication of the points of the Law must be followed up until they reveal their underlying kinship with the moral nature of God. And no text book and no teacher could adequately cover the vast range of material contained in

that field—which is no less than the range of man's emotional, spiritual, mental, and practical life. Jesus contents himself with making suggestions, many of which follow one another in the Sermon on the Mount: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill. . . . But I say unto you that anyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger." "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already with her in his heart." "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself. . . . But I say unto you, Swear not at all." It would be ridiculous to say that Jesus was indifferent to the particular application of the Law, or that He desired to weaken those enactments which specifically forbade such wrongs as murder, adultery, or perjury. Far from it. But what most vitally concerned Him was to centre attention upon motive and desire. Action might or might not be a true test of moral worth. What was important was the purity or filthiness of those streams which had their origin in the inner recesses of mind and heart. The value quality of a man's life lay, not in deeds done in unquestioning conformity with rule, but with the governing principles of his conduct. Moral philosophy, divorced entirely from any contact with sentimental reverence for the teaching of Jesus, has come to the same conclusion in the statement, for in-

stance, of Kant that "There is nothing good in this world save a good will."

Any teaching which drives conduct back to the secret springs of action, and regards only the originating impulse, does so, of necessity, at the expense of the importance and authority of any code; for the code itself ceases to be primarily the source and grounds of righteousness, even though the underlying motive is not more than that of obedience. It is not the Law that creates the faculty of obedience; it is the instinct of obedience that gives birth to the Law. It is quite conceivable that Jesus would have felt that there is no general difference between what the enlightened mind and conscience prompted a man to do, and the actual thing that the Law commanded him to do. The enlightened mind and conscience works on the assumption that the silent places of the heart are all known to God—as Jesus so often asserted—and, therefore, it was a matter of plain common sense to make those silent places approvable by Him. The Law simply tried to indicate how most readily this might be done. There was no disagreement here. The pure man would consent to the Law, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and the truthful man to the Law, "Thou shalt not foreswear thyself." Consequently the devout and pious Israelite could say, with perfect sincerity, "My delight is in the Law of the Lord."

But, unfortunately, the Law, however comprehen-

sive, could not embrace all the special considerations of temperament, circumstance, conduct. Jesus Himself illustrates how it might very well happen, and continually did happen, that a man should feel a right impulse at variance with the written commandment. An excellent example is His treatment of Sabbath observance. Is it lawful, He asked, when His compassion was called in question, to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath? Is it lawful to save life or to kill? The Jewish law admitted, and Rabbinic practice sanctioned, the abrogation of the strict Sabbath requirement for acts of necessary mercy; but what, save a man's own heart, could give judgment as to which of such acts were really necessary and which were not? And, so soon as the judgment of a man's own heart comes into the question, the complete authority of the Law is invalidated. A man suffered from a chronic disease. He was in no pain. It was the Sabbath Day. He had waited so long for relief, why should he not wait a few more hours? What was to decide which was the more important—immediate freedom for him who was sick and incapacitated, or adherence to the letter of the command? There is no doubt in Jesus' mind. He invokes a Law of Consideration, which, in His philosophy, transcends the authority of legalism. And the man is, from that moment, made whole. There must be many occasions, He seems to say, when some higher principle must set aside the many non-moral requirements of the Law. And if, even in

one case, the guidance of principle is allowed to set itself above the Law, then the universal obligation of obedience to the Law disappears. An impulse that grew from God is substituted for a ritual that rose with men.

Thirdly, and in close connection with the foregoing, should be noticed Jesus' summing up of the whole matter in His limitation of the range of the Law. Mention has been made of His protest against the growing weight of oral tradition—such protests as His accusation against the Scribes and Pharisees that they "bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne; but they themselves will not move them with their finger." Much of this growing tradition was occupied with ceremony and ritual and the minutiae of technical purification. This, Jesus declared, had nothing to do with true righteousness. He enunciates a definite principle, which frees mankind from much that, in any society, is identified with righteous practice when He says, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without the man that, going into him, can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man." His emphasis, once more, is on motive, and actions are to be judged by that inside a man which dictates them. The mere performance, in practice, of what appears laudable and true has no value in itself, for it may spring from premises that are utterly unworthy. When the action is the full expression of a motive that

is beautiful and good, then righteousness may be said to be on its way to establishment.

But, it might justifiably be asked, does not this protest of Jesus apply with equal force to the Law as to the oral tradition of the later legalists? And there can be no reasonable doubt as to the answer. Much of the detailed enactment of such books as Leviticus is only slightly removed from the minute prescriptions of the Scribes and Pharisees of Our Lord's time. For instance, in the book of Deuteronomy, there is the command that there should be fringes upon the four borders of the vesture wherewith a man is covered. Also that an ox and an ass should not be harnessed together to the plough. And there are numerous other trivial laws which exist side by side with very important and acceptable precepts about marriage, worship, and social behaviour. Such could hardly have escaped at least the implied criticism of Jesus' principle that such insignificant matters are in no way connected with the values that inhere in moral goodness. To treat all such laws as of equal importance was to make sport of the sanity of God.

It was inevitable, then, that His teaching must challenge the Law as well as the oral tradition. It was a question of discrimination, of degree. In the interests of social order and national harmony there was doubtless a real reason why many of these apparently trifling enactments should have existed at one time or another.

Jesus did not despise them or ridicule them. He might have said with the poet that

> "New occasions teach new duties,
> Time makes ancient good uncouth."

And He set Himself, not to abrogate the old, but to draw out the new. It is the curse of any set form of law that, being stereotyped, it cannot change to meet changing conditions. And especially was this the case in regard to the Law that was imbedded in the Scripture, for the holy regard in which that Scripture was held applied to every syllable of it; and the Law came to be looked upon as the unalterable expression of the constant will of God. If the reader is tempted to smile at such puerility he should remember that there are numerous instances to-day of an equal reverence for commands that have long since lost their first meaning. Good Jews are still orthodox in their diet; and most Christian women still cover their heads in a place of worship.

In conclusion, then, it would seem that Jesus, devoted as He was to the Law of His race and His Church, was trying with all His eloquence to make men perceive that righteousness must be carried back beyond mere observance of the Law. It must be a matter of attitudes and motives, enjoying the consent of all a man's faculties—heart and mind as well as will. It must have a positive character which is not content with

playing safe or expending its energies on lesser considerations. It must be the active expression of great principles. But these principles are not the principles of each individual agent. Jesus is not making a man the final law for himself. The governing principles are those which are discovered in an understanding of the relationship of a Father to men, and men to a Father, which the sons of God alone are able fully to comprehend. They are expressed in a spiritual kinship. They are the motives and inspirations of those who live in the household of God. Their prime factor is love. Love, therefore, is the final law.

This is the answer to those who regard Jesus as an ethical teacher, and an ethical teacher alone. He would not, in all probability, have understood what that phrase meant. The good that He did was done because the will of the Father, working in Him, made it impossible to do otherwise—and not because it was the right and proper course to follow. Christianity knows nothing of ethics as such. It cannot divorce its morality from its religion. A good man must be a religious man and a religious man must be a good man. Christian morality is the morality of a life lived under the realization of the bond between Father and son. When once that bond is established and accepted, the texture of life, both towards God and towards men, becomes whole and undivided, and its colour is universally clear and radiant. Christ would have been aghast at the

thought that men, in their dealings with one another, should use Him as a pattern and not as a power.

That is why we need not complain because He did not give adequate advice for the decision of many of the pressing problems of to-day. He intimated that all those pressing problems could be settled if men followed the guidance of His spirit. His specific counsel did not meet all the needs even of His own day. He was silent, for instance, on such issues as slavery, capital punishment, and Roman imperialism. Much more, then, would that specific counsel fail amid the complexities of modern civilization. But the general principle, the Law of Consideration, which He followed, is clear to anyone who takes the trouble to study the broad implications of His Gospel. It is that which directs the thought and behaviour of any true household of faith. It is true to-day—as it has always been true—that no man need ever be in doubt as to what constitutes right or wrong, provided he keeps in touch with the spirit of the will of God as revealed in the thought and practice of Jesus Christ. Thus to live will not be to dispense with the Law or the prophets, but to find their eternal truth expressed and fulfilled in Him.

CHAPTER IX

GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST

ALL that has already been said about the moral teaching, the character, the self-consciousness, of Jesus, brings us face to face with a consideration which has an importance all its own. We cannot avoid asking, in true reverence, what was the element of uniqueness in Him that made men perceive that He was different from themselves—the element which influenced them to place Him, rather than His teachings, at the heart of the Christian Gospel. The necessity of this consideration rises naturally and inevitably out of our study of the moral approach to life viewed from His eyes; for it is His own moral attitude, more than anything else, which makes us aware of His profound difference from other men.

We are not now speaking of the depth and freshness of Jesus' moral insight. To know Him at all intimately is to perceive that there is in Him a tremendous moral dynamic, a driving force for the good things of righteousness. In the moral realm He is, in fact, the "first of them that know." Men have never come into His presence without realizing that He is an intense moral

challenge; and men have never fully sought to follow Him without being immeasurably refreshed. Twenty centuries have drunk deep of the springs of His moral intuition; and the strengthening stream still flows forth undiminished, and available to all.

Still less, even, than upon the evidence of His supreme moral perception did the first sense of His moral uniqueness depend upon men's awareness of the actual loveliness of His life. In a way we seem to be more conscious of that than those who stood nearest Him—it has often been noted that the ancient Jews had no sense of natural beauty—or, it may be, we denizens of an age that is prone to bestow the greatest meed of admiration upon the pragmatic test of action find a satisfaction in speaking about it more. Is it not pardonable in us to be at times somewhat amazed at the lack of appreciation of Jesus expressed in the early records of His life? The texture of that extraordinary ministry is everywhere summed up in a few curt phrases. "He went about doing good." There are no "Ohs" and "Ahs." We are not bidden to note how, in this action or in that, He displayed His kindness or His justice or His mercy or His gracefulness. The tale of His life, even in those moments of the greatest dramatic tension, such as the story of Gethsemane or the Resurrection, commands no vocabulary save the simplest, and no comments save the inevitable. Perhaps the writers had the spiritual perception to know that what took place lay

beyond ordinary powers of expression by the human tongue. Perhaps they realized that there are glories too high for mortal praise—that there are moments for which the only tribute lies in silence.

The uniqueness men felt in Him was, in essence, rather a lack of something which the best of their race seemed to have than an added element in human perfection. It was the absence of an expected attribute to a good life. It could be summed up by speaking, not so much of the consciousness, as the unconsciousness, of Jesus. Those who see in a glass darkly suppose that religion easily begets a consciousness of virtue. It is true that an imperfect religion, expressed in standards and values that miss the heights, does do so. It does no harm to remind ourselves occasionally that the charge of spiritual smugness, so often levelled against the professed adherents of religion, is not always idle and unprovoked. It is a useful, and, in fact, necessary discipline to remember that, when men become smug and self-satisfied, it is time that they began to look, in reverent criticism, at their gods. Little gods make small demands. Low standards are easy of fulfillment. Cheap values demand a meagre price. On the other hand, when the concept of God is deepened and spiritualized —raised, it may be, to a height that seems beyond the reach of human brains and hearts—then the moral demand grows with increasing insistence. And, as the moral demand grows, so there inevitably creeps into

the soul of the devout a stronger sense of falling below the level of what is required. That this is true can be proved by all the pages of religious and spiritual history. When the prophet and the worshipper come to understand that God is the Holy One, religion becomes a matter of the highest ethical content. And it is then that the prophet and the worshipper realize that they are men of unclean lips, dwelling among a people of unclean lips.

Actually it is always the saint who is least conscious of his own perfection; for he is a saint primarily by virtue of what he has seen of God that others have not seen. And, as his spiritual vision has led him on and on to the contemplation of increasingly higher levels of moral beauty, so he, more than all other men, understands that he can never rest content. For him the prize is intensely, vitally desirable—but it is always immeasurably beyond his reach. His steps have led him a little way along the path—but the goal is ever in the distance. We may read and study the lives of a St. Augustine, a St. Francis, a Lancelot Andrews, and we shall close the pages with the conviction that it is unequivocally the saint who is most conscious of his sin. And this consciousness of failure, this sense of the inescapable gulf between his own action and the requirements of God, has brought to many a devout soul an unhappiness too deep for words, a despair that often threatens the whole fabric of life. And yet it is precisely this grim

feeling of incompletion which Jesus laid down as the prerequisite to the way of holiness. Nothing, in His eyes, so effectually kept men from achieving righteousness as the spirit of self-sufficiency. That is, as we have seen, the genesis of His strictures on the inadequacy of the religion of legalism. It was, in most cases, easy enough to fulfill a specific command. And, once the specific command was fulfilled, it was equally easy to feel a glow of self-congratulation that the whole duty had been done. The legalism of the day might readily breed a spirit of atrophying contentment. But, according to the new revelation, a man must never feel that he has won his spiritual battle. There was more hope, Jesus thought, for the publican, lifting up his eyes to heaven, beating on his breast, and acknowledging his shortcomings and simpleness, than for the complacent Pharisee who felt that he had already accomplished all that there seemed need for him to do.

And yet—and this is what men, perhaps unconsciously, noticed and reverenced about Jesus—He never betrays in Himself that same haunting consciousness of sin which has always characterized the saint. The mood, the emotion, the instinct, which He required of others, did not apply to Him. There is about Him, and Him alone, a moral serenity which the saint has never attained. It is not the product of that complacency that has just been referred to; for the Pharisaic self-satisfaction came from a sense of moral credits duly earned and

entered in the balance sheet: it is not the result of formal obedience to the letter of the law; for the letter of the law, as has been seen, was subservient, in His eyes, to a higher and a broader discipline of motive. With any mechanical schemes of perfection Jesus had nothing to do. They might bring a suggestion of spiritual well-being to other men; to Him they could never have meant anything save the distress that comes from a knowledge of opportunities that have been lost. He was, it seems, unconscious, in His own case, of the blessings of righteousness and the threatenings of evil, although He knew that other men could never be lifted upon a moral platform of such unparalleled eminence. Even in prayer, where one false touch of self-assurance breaks the bond of communion between the soul and God, and where, above all else, He taught us the necessity of being honest and genuine, Jesus could never have said, "Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."

It is not that conflict did not enter into His experience. His was a life supremely tempted. We have said before that temptation comes to a man at the moral level upon which he lives. We should scarcely, therefore, picture so august a figure as Jesus as being beset by the crude and gusty passions which sweep poor men and women at some low horizon of life and outlook. But, because temptation is limited in range, it does not follow that it is the less intense. In all probability it

is more so. Temptations to ambition, to pride, to impatience with the slowness and stupidity of others—these, and many like them, are the temptations incident to greatness. Jesus, without question, felt their force as men less great than He have never felt it. The Gospels nowhere give us a picture of Him as blessed with a life protected, sheltered from the storms. We are told that He was "tempted in all points like as we are." And so there is no difference between us and Him on the ground of conflict. The difference lies in the fact that we meet with defeat and He proved His mastery. By the power of some inner conviction which we do not understand; by some intuitive knowledge of God which we do not share; by some strength, the source of which has never been completely revealed in human life, He has triumphed where we have failed. And, as He triumphed, He put aside the strain and the stain of the battle, and regarded no more the days when the issue was in doubt.

We have been guilty of a kind of disservice to Jesus by speaking so much about His "sinlessness." It has been the centre of too much of our discussion of Him. It has led to a meticulous appraisement of every little act He did, and every simple word He spoke, at a time, and under circumstances, so far removed from ours that a due sense of proportion must inevitably be lost. Some of us feel that we must justify and sustain Him; some of us feel, perhaps, that we must fault Him; for-

getting that we can never recover, as surely as a decisive verdict such as this demands, the exact occasion of every deed and word. This tendency is leading us today into endless and unprofitable apologetic. Does the case for Jesus' moral uniqueness rest upon data regarding which the historical and scholarly critic must say the approving word before any final judgment can be passed? After all, it is Jesus Himself who gives us the right principle of judgment. It is, as we have heard Him say, by the secret things of the heart that a man is to be known. It is by the motives that lie deeper than the action that he is to be judged. Jesus does not claim to be Himself any exception to this rule. Definitely, in His case, we take our stand at once outside the region wherein we feel we must know with exactness the conditioning circumstances of His thought and conduct. We do not need to depend upon the pragmatic judgment of those who made the first close estimate of His life. We do not really need that estimate, for it was founded upon premises with which we are not sufficiently familiar. Any one of us, if there be a true vein of sympathy in our souls, can, in the homely records that are left to us, look deeply into the heart and mind of Jesus. One thing stands gloriously out—Jesus' will to find and follow the will of His Father. To the verdict of that will He refers everything. His whole life is summed up in the purpose, "To do Thy will, O God." Through every episode of His career, in sorrow,

joy, temptation, and death, the harmony that rang in His ears was the music of God's divine plan. The unique moral factor in Jesus is the completeness of His identification with the Father. That is the searching test. To have such community of purpose with God that one is not ever at variance with Him; to follow the leading of His will into the valley of humiliation, and not find that one's path deflects from His, that is true moral achievement. Jesus' life shows something beyond what is ordinarily suggested by sinlessness, for sinlessness has a negative implication of mere freedom from fault. To describe Him as sinless is not to make a false statement; it is to make an inadequate one: for it lacks the suggestion of that high, heroic consecration of a whole life—mind, desire, purpose, action—to the call of God, which is the beacon that lighted every passing moment for Jesus Christ.

God in the face of Jesus Christ! Is there any need to say more? Jesus exhibits throughout His life a moral identity with God; and on that pinnacle many would be content to rest their case for the truth of all that He ever said, or that others ever claimed, about His Sonship. It is His uniqueness to manifest righteousness, the beauty of God's holiness, and to win men to it by its compelling loveliness. But the case for the truth of the highest men think of Jesus cannot be rested there. To make this the final criterion would be at once to be blind to the needs of men, as we shall see, and to over-

look something which is essential to an intimate understanding of His mind. Sinlessness is an attribute beyond price—but it is not enough to mediate conversion to the world.

Men are not easily won to holiness. It is to be regretted that there is more poetry than truth in such expressions as "we needs must love the highest when we see it." In some natures the mere suggestion of the ideal provokes a resentment that sometimes amounts to hatred. That is not only because the way of holiness is hard, or because he who walks in it finds himself surrounded by pitfalls and precipices, and assailed at every step by the gusts of passion. It is because man is already weakened by his past failures. He goes forward with misgivings which are born of the recollection of previous mistakes. And, as we have seen, the more deeply there lies in a man the instinct that should make for holiness, the more strongly do these many enemies fight about his path. The crying need of human nature is not merely to be shown the pattern of God's will, to be exhorted to copy it, and at last to be convinced that happiness can never be really possessed until that consummation is achieved. The crying need of human nature is to be restored to a right relationship with God. Man needs to be forgiven.

Men sneered at Jesus, and made light of His words, because He kept company with publicans and sinners. It was an unintelligent criticism. That was the element

in human society with which He seemed to long to be associated. He is not found at the elbow of the few choice souls who succeed in being morally great. He is found on the plane where the vast majority of us live; and His mission, as He constantly asserted and implied, was primarily to the individuals in that great gathering of the lesser good. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." And it is the way in which He presented that call to the sinners, the medicine which He prescribed for the sick, that brings before us another great element in the uniqueness of Jesus—His genius for forgiveness.

Forgiveness, Jesus taught, is one of the most significant duties in the holy life. He required it in us to an extent beyond which it seems, to men on the ordinary plane of living, right or possible to forgive. "Not till seventy times but until seventy times seven." He made man's willingness to forgive the measure and criterion of God's generous dealing with him. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." And yet, whatever be the obligation put upon us, we realize that we must come, at length, to the end of our human powers. There are limits beyond which our capacity for forgiveness cannot go. There are privileges of forgiveness to the sanctity of which we cannot draw near. According to Jesus, I may, nay, I must, find a way to the forgiveness of him who injures my personal life, in any and in every way.

But, apart from that, what of those subtle consequences of sin which go further than this single act of offence towards me? What of the sins that do not touch me personally at all? Am I to forgive—have I the power to forgive—the reckless blasphemy which destroys God's values for another soul, or the cruel disloyalty which ruins another home than mine? Surely I am humble enough to recognize my own limitations, and to know that forgiveness such as this is beyond my reach. And not beyond my reach alone—beyond the reach of the earthly world of men. It is a quality that transcends our simple little spiritual powers. It is a quality that is divine.

It is only as we come to share, in our blind way, in the moral outlook of Jesus that we realize how supremely difficult it is truly and wholly to forgive. It has nothing in common with the easy tolerance which, in the estimate of so many men, passes for the spirit of forgiveness. For, looking at sin with Jesus' eyes, we become aware of the infinite havoc that it brings—havoc far beyond the struggling efforts of men to repair. We see it as fundamental disaster wrought in a world which God intended to be righteous, loving, and at peace. We see it as a thwarting of a divine purpose, the refusal of a divine gift, the denial of a divine will. It is not merely that I have committed an offence against another soul. It is that the spirit and temper of my action, running like a blaze through a field of stubble,

light little paths of flame in unknown corners, which at last, it may be, drive the poor and the innocent from their homes. Such evil spreads quickly beyond our control, forever beyond the reach of our casual mending.

Jesus forgave with an authority which it is not within our ability even to approach. His forgiveness is direct, personal, unconditioned. It is not hedged about with a suspicion of qualification. We can see its thoroughness in the Gospel stories, where it is often pointed out by those who least desired to commend Him. But that is natural. There are times when the truth about us is most readily learned from the lips of our enemies, who have a disposition to speak it in malice. So it happened when Jesus was healing a paralytic in the synagogue at Capernaum. "Seeing their faith He said to the paralytic, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'" There are two factors in that sentence which should give us pause—the apparent disregard of the circumstances of any particular sin, or of anything, in fact, beyond faith in His own healing power; and the almost summary character of the act of forgiveness itself. Jesus' enemies were quick to catch the implication of the latter. Here, they saw, was authority exceeding the bounds of right or reason. Jesus, a man, the son of a carpenter, was infringing upon the prerogatives of God. From their point of view such a thing was wholly wrong and utterly inadmissible. How dare this man speak in such a manner? He blasphemes. Who can forgive sins save

God alone? We can almost hear the angry and excited clamour of the crowd. But Jesus' reply is unequivocal, and completely self-revealing in its directness: "Whether is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, arise, take up thy bed and walk. But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, then said He to the paralytic, I say to thee, arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine own house." Regarding other points in this answer we must speak later. For the moment our purpose is simply to record the fact that, when Jesus forgave, He did so with an authority which no other moral teacher has, at any time, been confident enough to assume.

Exactly the same impression—and it is of the highest importance—is given in another passage which tells of Jesus' act of forgiveness towards the sinful woman who crept to His feet at dinnertime with the alabaster cruse of ointment. The host was scandalized that He, knowing the woman for what she was, should have anything whatever to do with her. And, according to His principles, He was entirely in the right. For here again there appear to be no possible grounds for forgiveness beyond the exhibition of a tender, personal faith in the Jesus whose minister she was. As a matter of fact, the significance of the story lies in the absence of any reason that men might naturally expect as an excuse for forgiveness. The woman does not recant; in fact, she does not open her mouth to say even a word of confes-

sion. But she had a definite loving regard for Him—and that is what wins forgiveness. "He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." The pronouncement is as summary and final as before; and draws forth the same surprised and indignant comment: "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" One must admit that those who "sat at meat with Him" had a good deal of justification for their angry criticism.

It is, perhaps, only fair to state that the authenticity of the two passages which have been quoted above as indicative of Jesus' attitude towards forgiveness has been challenged by some critics. The stories are, however, so congruent with our estimate of His characteristic method of speech and action that they are here accepted as genuine. A careful analysis of the arguments on both sides of the question have failed to disturb an a priori conviction of their essential integrity.

There are, then, two noticeable factors in Jesus' quality of forgiveness, to which further attention must be drawn. We said, in discussing the question of miracles, that it is impossible, or, at least, misleading, to consider the miracle in detachment from the whole mind and purpose of Jesus. The stupendous things that He did for men were not done by any power in Him which was distinct from everything else that He did or was. We said, in fact, that He would expect to do miracles by virtue of the dignity of the office He bore. That was part of His authority and commission as Son of Man.

The same is true of His virtue of forgiveness. It must be noted—in the first of the two instances referred to above—that healing and forgiveness are brought into close relationship, and that both, without distinction, are associated with the work and prerogative of the Son of Man. The logic of the close connection between them is clear as soon as we realize that the work and prerogative of the Son of Man was to bring into existence the Kingdom of God, which involved the overthrow of the kingdom of Satan; and the kingdom of Satan represented evil in all forms, moral as well as physical. To Satan Jesus always ascribed everything that was not of God. Hence, and from this standpoint, it makes little or no difference at what point the attack against Satan is made. It is a matter of indifference whether it is easier or more important to say "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or to say "Arise and walk." Both reveal the power and authority of Jesus over the world force of evil, and both exhibit His spiritual credentials.

But, in the second place, Jesus' power of forgiveness is not merely a deduction from His office. The major element in it is underived, springing from His own personal character and nature rather than from any title which He possesses or dignity that He holds. It seems that He regarded forgiveness as unquestionably His right, as one who shared without mediation in the first fruits of the mind and will and purpose of the Highest. Hence it is extended freely to those who accept Him.

It is a reward to those who believe in Him, a boon to those who serve Him. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Jesus shares the divine initiative in salvation. He upsets all human calculations, all nicely balanced systems of spiritual cause and effect, simply because God Himself does. He forgives as we can never forgive because He feels Himself at one with God, not in goodness only, but in His astounding quality of loving kindness. He is at one with the divine process of redemption.

A third element in Our Lord's teaching which shows God in the face of Jesus Christ lies in His insistence on the meaning and condition of judgment. The thought could not fail to be of singular and significant prominence in the message of anyone who cast His preaching in the form of the proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom—as we have seen that Jesus almost invariably did—for every concept of the Kingdom naturally involved the concept of divine judgment. Judgment is the expression of God's disapproval of all that must pass away before the Kingdom can be set up; and it is likewise the recognition of the moral character of those who are fit and worthy to enter into it when it comes into being. The Day of Judgment is the critical moment when the false is distinguished from the true, and when life is revealed in its valid and permanent meanings. In particular, judgment is regarded as the final overthrow of Satan, and the world order which he has

created; and the vindication of the rule of God. It is a day which rejoices in the defeat of all the hosts of evil, and the inauguration of the heavenly Kingdom, supreme and unassailable.

Hence the prelude to the teaching of Jesus was the appeal, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand"—an appeal which, directly or indirectly, was always on His own lips. But the repentance He contemplated was something much more farreaching than had ever before been presented to the conscience of men under the shadow of that word. It was more fundamental than sorrow for past sin, or even resolute purpose of future amendment: it was a metanoia, a change of mind and heart, a complete transfer of allegiance from the spirit of the world to the values of God. Only one who, with unswerving intention and undivided loyalty, had accepted God's rule could meet the searching test of the coming judgment. The prophet Jesus was, like many a prophet before Him, but to a deeper degree than any, a moral teacher whose earnestness was deepened by the sense of impending crisis.

But to insist, as has often been done, that Jesus conceived of His mission as finished when once He had repeated the traditional warnings concerning divine judgment, and, by example and influence, had done all that apparently lay in His power to enable men to meet its tests and reap the reward beyond, is to misread the mind of the historical Jesus, and the implication of the

rôle of Son of Man which He had assumed. By divine appointment the Messiah was to judge the world. Whatever other offices may be ascribed to Him, the office of judge is always constant and pre-eminent. The Messianic claim, of necessity, includes that prerogative. And so Jesus, in virtue of the office that He held, believed that He Himself was to judge the world.

The primitive Christian community made the return of Jesus to pronounce judgment almost the capital article of faith. And, in this, they must have confirmed the expectancy of His own mind, as they read it in the reports of His words; for it is difficult to believe that so vigorous and influential a conviction could have found widespread credence had it not rested on the authority of His own attitude towards the future. It is maintained by some, in opposition to this view, that the very strength of that primitive conviction lends a degree of uncertainty to the Gospel witness; and such critics assert that, in this connection, perhaps, more than in any other, hope has lent far too much colour to the record. Nevertheless, even when all possible allowances have been made, there still remains an irreducible minimum of testimony in the Gospels to the effect that the mind of Jesus anticipated a return to judgment. Nothing, for instance, could be more explicit than His assertion of His authority as judge at the moment when He stood discredited, and, in fact, condemned before

the highest tribunal of His people: "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" asked the high priest. "And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:61-62). To Jesus' hearers there was nothing ambiguous in the meaning of those words, for they recalled inevitably the picture of the Messianic judgment. Even if the exactness of His answer has not been preserved, yet we know that it was upon the strength of some such assertion that He was convicted. And these particular words do not stand alone, although there is a peculiar heroism and grandeur that marks them out in consideration of the time and place and circumstance which called them forth. They find infinite substantiation in much that He said at other times, both in definite statement, as in all the passages in which He gives comfort to those who might be in distress "when all these things shall come to pass," and through the indirect teaching of many of the parables, such as that of the householder who distributed the talents to his servants in anticipation of His return, and that of the wise and foolish virgins, who make different preparation for the inevitable future. Even to a modern reader there is a personal note in these sayings which links them immediately with the character and mission of the man who uttered them. They were not fables from another life, but illustrations from His own life. Such is our instinctive feeling about them to-day:

such, to a much greater degree, must have been the feelings of those who heard the tones of His voice.

So far it would not seem illogical to assume that His insistence upon His right and power to judge seemed to depend upon His adoption of the prerogatives of the Son of Man; for, time after time, He falls back, as it were, on this titular authority. But we cannot leave the question there. To maintain that Jesus sought to make His influence conform with the demands of a traditional rôle is to overlook what is most characteristic in His approach to many aspects of His ministry, and especially to this matter of His treatment of judgment. It is, in fact, to overlook His insistence upon His judicial authority as also inherent in Himself. He recognized, and acted upon, the fact that He was judge, but not solely as an inference from any part which He felt called upon to play. His office appears simply to confirm and make explicit a right which He regarded as His upon grounds far more intuitive and personal. He made, indeed, a formal presentation of the quality of the Messiah's judgment, but it is, by no means, the most vital part of His teaching.

God in the face of Jesus Christ! If He regarded Himself as man, and man alone, how did He dare to hold what unmistakably was His view of judgment? How did He dare to forgive, or to set Himself up as man's moral arbiter? He must have known that there vibrated in Him strains which were beyond the compass of man's

mortal nature. By virtue of these He was what He was; and by virtue of these we call Him divine.

Accordingly, in this connection, we note two separate characteristics of His teaching, which, however, usually stand in such close conjunction that it is necessary to treat them together. The first is Jesus' extraordinary insistence upon Himself as determinative in men's lives; the second is His projection into the realm of men's present experience of the judgment which it is the Messiah's right to pronounce at the last day.

Jesus is not alone judge, but He Himself constitutes a judgment. He is critical of the destiny of men, not simply because He will, at some far-off time, pass sentence upon their lives, but because He is at present in those lives. He identifies Himself with the Kingdom; or, it might be even more true to say, He identifies the Kingdom with Himself. The Kingdom, Jesus taught, is the highest possible good, which men must either accept or reject, the former to their eternal salvation, the latter to their irremediable cost. It demands and justifies every effort of attainment, among which not least is the sacrifice of what the world holds most dear. Into the quest for this Kingdom men may enter now, certain of them to gain it as a present possession, others still fearfully to hope for it as an eventual consummation. But there are well-defined conditions of entrance. And, in giving them expression, Jesus brings us to grips with the element which is most unique in His teaching,

an element for which traditional expectations had not for a moment prepared the way. For we are brought to realize that men enter the Kingdom by virtue of an immediate and personal judgment of Jesus, which, as it were, answers to, and corresponds with, their immediate and personal attitude to Him. That is the amazing and terrible revelation which lies at the heart of His most intimate message. It is enough to make even the most perfect life pause in uncertainty. Does its every step parallel the footsteps of its Master? The question is vital, for every step means judgment.

It was upon these intimate and personal grounds, then, that Jesus passed judgment upon the lives of those who most completely surrendered themselves to Him. For the others, those who owned to an allegiance divided between Himself and the world, such conditions of judgment do not seem to have been required. Theirs was the way of the normal moral and spiritual discipline of life; and theirs was the necessity of waiting for the final judgment which He would pass in the fullness of time. It is in connection, perhaps, with the immediate judgment which was the portion of the few who accepted, without regard to consequences, the way He set before them, that we enter into a more real understanding of the "hard sayings" of Jesus. These "hard sayings" express the requirements imposed by the high condition of those who found present admission into the Kingdom; and it is significant that they repre-

sent attitudes to Himself. Supreme among them is the necessity of "being worthy" of Him. A note of intensely personal feeling runs through such passages as the famous admonition that the one who would come after Him must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Him: "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it" (Matthew 16:25).

But we must realize that such judgment is only anticipatory, for its criterion lies in Jesus' right to judge hereafter; and, further, we should note that the same personal emphasis enters into His teaching in regard to the final judgment as we find in the conditions He lays down with reference to a disciple's immediate entrance into the Kingdom. It is the attitude of the believer towards Himself that is all-important. It is without equivocation that He asserts that the Son of Man will bear witness before the angels of God to everyone who bears witness to Him before men; and, conversely, that, when He comes in the glory of the Father, He will be ashamed of all who had been ashamed of Him and His words amid the temptations of the world. This is no isolated thought, for it runs throughout the Gospels; and it would be difficult to overemphasize the unique character or the significant importance of the teaching that men may, by some high attitude of personal devotion to Jesus, and some truly sacrificial action done for His sake, win from Him an immediate place in His

eternal Kingdom, or, to use another phrase, gain in this life the salvation that He offers them.

Such teaching has profoundly influenced subsequent Christian life, as we see, for instance, in the importance of the "seal of martyrdom" in the primitive Church. Yet it is necessary to recognize that it is teaching of a special and, as it were, extraordinary kind, presupposing, as it does, situations which do not enter into the experience of all people, and demanding capacities for action and response beyond the powers of the average man. Not for all is the way of high adventure; and even the adventurous, if he is to maintain the promise of his exalted enterprise, must meet the slow testing of life's moral demands, which present themselves in terms of monotonous duty. To the ordinary man falls the task of carrying on where much is necessary and little is heroic. And most men are ordinary men. What had Jesus to say to them? He still asserts that He will judge. He sets before them moral requirements more searching than any they had ever known, and He enforces them with personal authority. His "I say unto you" rings out sharp and clear and decisive; and He judges men, and will judge them, by their response: "Everyone, therefore, which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock." In Jesus' moral teaching men detected an unusual note—that of finality. Did they not say that He spoke with authority?

And the authority is patently that of one who possesses the right to pass sentence, from which there is no appeal, upon character and action. In His hands are the issues of life and death, because he shares with His Father the inexorable power of moral judgment.

This is the aspect of His teaching with which the modern man finds it hardest to come to terms. It is far removed from the mere ethical idealism to which we tend to reduce the moral teaching of Jesus. It has no apparent kinship with the emasculated Gospel which is too often preached in His name. As Jesus is not merely a moral guide, or simply an inspiration of moral living, but a supreme judge, then His teaching becomes a matter of universal obligation. And, further than that, He Himself contributes an eternal value for our living. It is imperative, therefore, that we know the mind of Christ.

So we are brought again to ask the old question—who is He who thus speaks? It is one who believed, from experiences so vital that He could never doubt them, that He stood in a unique relation to God, which likewise implied a unique relation to man. And this latter relationship constituted a mission which He sought to express and fulfill in the character of the supernatural Messiah. Much, indeed, that was associated with that historical conception of Messiahship served Him to no purpose; some of it, in many ways, was a hindrance. But it did define the powers which He

felt to be His, such as that of judgment. And it did give substance to that superhuman character and authority which, by intuition, He realized that He possessed. Without any doubt, as we have seen, the rôle which He assumed profoundly affected Jesus' thinking; but still more profoundly did He affect and modify the usual meaning of the rôle. To every traditional concept He added something original, interpreting it by a conscious authority which was prior to that of His office. He finds Himself aware of a power of moral initiative. He deepens men's consciousness of sin, yet He Himself has no consciousness of sin. He exercises the prerogatives of forgiveness and of final judgment, and His grounds for doing so are so personal to Himself as to suggest no Messianic prerogatives. These things are so momentous and so strange that they invite question. What are we to say of one who thus assumed moral identity with God, and claimed to exercise divine functions?

We can only say that He was divine—that is, the manifestation of the Divine in human life. And that is what Jesus Himself appears to have thought about Himself. His was not an ordinary human life. His consciousness may have told Him, as a deduction from the part He played, that the man who was to fulfill its promises must be as He was. And yet there is no hint of any unnatural striving to conform with a pattern. He was always essentially Himself. What we instinc-

tively note is His quiet, conscious transmutation of all that He touched. The uniqueness we find in Jesus goes back to Jesus' own mind. He knew Himself to be the heavenly Son of Man, and, in a sense beyond men's understanding, the Son of God.

CHAPTER X

THE CROSS

In the end His enemies succeeded in crucifying Jesus. It may be that we should not, in the interests of justice, place the entire responsibility for His death upon His professed opponents. Perhaps the well-meant loyalty of His friends was a contributory factor. Perhaps they were too vocal, too tactless in their assertions of His pre-eminence in their own lives, too insistent upon carrying out what might seem to be His anti-social claims. As the Psalmist recognized, a man's most destructive adversaries may often be those of his own household. But though, for the most part, these friends ran away, when the crisis came, and left Him alone in His tragic glory, theirs were not the voices that cried out for His execution, and theirs were not the hands that placed Him on the Cross. That responsibility, at least, must rest upon men whose bitterest condemnation it is that they could not understand the highest when they saw it. The knaves and the fools, we are told, both go to hell—but the fools first.

The Gospels give us the facts, and, in the main, they tell us the story simply. There is, as usual with these

authorities, extraordinarily little comment that might suggest the influence of later reflection on what had taken place. There is no moralizing upon the lessons of the event, and no tawdry words of appreciation or speculation. For this silence every generation of Christians may well be grateful. For it is reverent silence. It seems as though it realized that the story of Jesus' dying is dramatic enough to suggest its own meaning, and incisive enough to point its own moral. There are intense moments, known to all of us, so charged with destiny that they render commendation or criticism an impertinent superfluity.

Some idea of the extent to which the death of Jesus interested the writers of our Gospels may be gleaned from the disproportionate amount of space given to the narrative of the events leading up to the Passion, and to the story of the Cross itself. Even so the accounts are pitiably short to us who crave to know every detail of that ascending life. We must learn to be content with what we have. But the fact that the recital of those few days is as detailed as it is would seem to show that at this point the sources upon which the writers relied became more circumstantial than previously. And that is itself an indication of the importance with which, even in the earliest days, the story of the death of Jesus was regarded. As to later ages, it is safe to say that no fact of history has more profoundly appealed to the imagination of men, or laid their thinking under greater

debt, than the Crucifixion. As years went on, the Cross, which was the hated instrument of a criminal's death, became the symbol which represented the deepest meaning of Christianity, and most powerfully expressed the nature and purpose of Him who died upon it. Phase after phase of historic Christianity has been no more than a reinterpretation of the Cross. Life after life of human discipleship has experienced an uplifting, spiritualizing influence that flows only from the Cross, raising mortal living above its normal plane and bringing it into touch with the divine.

More than any other fact known to the philosophies of the world the Cross challenges interpretation. And the many theologies that have been forthcoming, arising from the preoccupation of the Church with the subject, run like theme motives through the great symphony of developing Christianity. They are baffling in their variety and complexity. Some of them are such as make the morning stars shout together; some of them inspire no sound save that of unworthy and arid speculation. Consequently we are driven once more to search the mind of Jesus, and to discover, if it is possible to discover, what His death meant to Him.

We see Him—the brighter and more hopeful days of His earlier Galilean ministry now long passed—ringed about with enemies of set determination to compass His death. There is no uncertainty whatever about the future. He must either seek refuge in flight, and so

surrender His friends and abandon His mission; or He must face the inevitable. He does not seem to have wavered. He accepts the implication of the issue, and makes His probable end known to His disciples. Thereupon He goes boldly to Jerusalem, where, as He well knows, hostility will have reached its zenith; and proudly proclaims His message, utterly careless of consequence, and with an earnest outspokenness He had never before employed. The end which He has foreseen is swift and certain. The inescapable arrest and trial take place, and He meets the verdict without bitterness to His murderers, and with unwavering faith in God. The sublimity of His devotion and His courage is unquestioned. His death is, as it were, the accolade of a life of unswerving loyalty to God and unselfish love for man.

May we not, it is often asked—and the question is tinged with impatience at the intellectual subtleties and magical implications that have shrouded the Cross—let the tale rest as it is told? The reason for the Cross lies unmistakably before us in the hatred which encompassed Jesus, and made His death an inevitable consequence. It was a historic accident, full of the pathos of tragedy, albeit an accident which Jesus rendered sublime. There is no need to look any further for the power of the Cross, many reasoners assert, than in the faith and love which it revealed, and in the spirit of unselfishness which flows from it.

The instinct thus to take one's stand on the intrinsic beauty of the story, without speculation and interpretation, is a natural one, and not to be disregarded. But, at the same time, it is questionable whether so simple a view of the Cross could conceivably explain the influence and power which it has had for all the Christian centuries. Other men have been crucified, and the world has not missed a heart-beat. Other teachers have been martyred, and there has been scarcely a ripple on the surface of human emotion. There was something fundamentally different and essentially dynamic about the death of Jesus. The scripture narrative is static and consistent, but it is static and consistent at the expense of the conclusive experience of history. Since He died the world has never been the same. Such is an uncontested fact. If one seeks to explain it, that can never be done by overlooking the mind of Jesus Himself, and the tenor of His general teaching.

The question as to how soon the conviction that He must die seized upon Jesus' mind we shall not seek to answer now. Possibly it can never be answered at all. The one being who could ever set our doubts at rest has left Himself with no articulate witness. But there are points of evidence. It is quite certain that the realization finds a place in His teaching just before His experience on the Mount of Transfiguration—roughly at the close of the ministry in Galilee. It is more than probable, of course, that there is no chronological sequence

in the sayings of Jesus as they are set on record in the Gospels. Passages of kindred application are doubtless grouped together without any discrimination as to the time or place of their delivery. But, at the same time, it does seem unquestioned that there is a fundamental difference between the emphasis of the earlier teaching and that of the later. The chronology can, to a certain extent, be recaptured from the content of the words themselves. At the beginning of the ministry Jesus' interests were centred in the affirmation of the Kingdom —the conditions of entrance into it, its nature, and the life to which it gave rise. Of His own part in its establishment and maintenance He, as yet, says very little. But, after the conversion of St. Peter, and the crisis of the Transfiguration, the emphasis changes, until very definitely it begins to fall on His own intimate and essential connection with it. It is from this time on that He starts so frequently to use the phrase, "Son of Man," with the meanings and suggestions made familiar to us in the previous chapters.

It is significant, as it is natural, that, when the threat of death becomes so menacing as to brook no concealment, He should choose to let that title ring out with increasing vehemence in the ears of His hearers. For the threat of death was something more than merely the expectation of His own personal martyrdom. The growing fervour of hostility, of which His sensitiveness could not but be acutely conscious, was spreading with

such venom as to involve in His own destruction that of the Kingdom which He preached so lovingly. It was this threat to the continued existence of His mission that made Him insist more and more definitely upon His Messianic character and purpose. What had probably been for a long time implicit in His mind becomes explicit in His teaching under the stress of opposition and anxiety. His own destiny, He implied, and the ultimate destiny of His Kingdom do not lie within the power of His enemies to determine, for He will set up the Kingdom in its completeness when He returns with power, as Son of Man, to usher in the new age. The will of God, in respect to that Kingdom, will eventually be carried to its fulfillment. It was not conceivable that the establishment of its provisions should be too long postponed, or that He, as God's agent in its consummation, should fail.

Jesus must ever have held it ideally possible that His Kingdom would win the allegiance of His people, even though, deep in His heart, He may have been tortured with doubt as to whether that allegiance would be as sympathetic and wholehearted as its tremendous implications demanded. Everything, however, was possible to God; and the essential appeal of the new order, and the Father's infinite power to do as He wills with His own, must be the unqualified assumption of that teaching by which, with never-ending patience and passion, He sought to bring the Kingdom into being. But now

the immediate prospect of death hangs in the air, like a threatening cloud. It needs no mind reader or discernment beyond the ordinary to detect the massing signs of His own rejection. And that rejection makes destruction a certainty. Therefore, the logic ran, if His own execution and the establishment of the Kingdom were equally inevitable, death could be no accident unforeseen by God, but an essential part of His plan, and .a manifestation of that will which the Son was foreordained to accomplish. The Kingdom, in its reality, must lie beyond the gate formed by His earthly grave, through which the new citizens would enter into their privileges, and He would come to join them in His glory. Therefore He must teach plainly and persistently of His return as Son of Man.

It is for these reasons that Jesus began to do what, from the standpoint of His people, was an incredible and incomprehensible thing. He begins to speak of death and the Messianic Kingship—two apparently irreconcilable destinies—as intimately linked together. "Hereafter," He said to the high priest and the Council which, as a matter of fact, had already condemned and destroyed Him, "shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." It was in terms and phrases such as this, as a number of modern scholars point out, that He expressed what must have come to be a conviction of His soul, the prophetic necessity that He should die. Gradu-

ally it had been revealed to Him—and now the imminence of the fact made its truth stand out with awful and unmistakable significance—that the Messiah must surrender His life in order that He may have power and opportunity to come again. Consequently the anomalous discipline of death is taken into, and made an essential part of, the Messianic preaching. To the modern mind, influenced by centuries of service and persecution and martyrdom, and familiar now with the thought that it is only through tribulation that we approach the stars, the truth may seem self-evident. To the Jew of Jesus' time it was unthinkable. Perhaps the Jew of Jesus' time had suffered so much, through the travail of His race, that death was release rather than promise.

It has often been questioned whether it is certain that Jesus, while there was still time to withdraw from danger, actually did speak of the necessity of His death. One convincing answer has just been given. Jesus came to realize, even if the realization was slow in making itself felt, that, somehow or other, His death was inescapably bound up with the permanent establishment of the Kingdom of God. And it is reasonable to suppose that, with such a thought in His mind, He would not be silent. For another answer, equally convincing, we must turn to the authority of the original Scripture. The obvious passages that immediately come to mind are four in St. Mark. The first, very detailed and ex-

plicit, reads: "And He began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (8-31). These words, according to their place in the record, and in conformity with the logic of circumstance, were spoken immediately before the Transfiguration. The second (Mark 9-12) contains His reference to that Elijah who comes and restores all things, and to the fact that it is written that the Son of Man should suffer. The third is almost a repetition of the first. But the prophecy that has by far the greatest conformity with the actual incidents is: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes. And they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall kill Him; and after three days He shall rise again" (10:33-34). So closely, indeed, do these predictions conform with the events of Passion that we must be prepared to consider the possibility, as the critics warn us, that Christian tradition made them more definitely circumstantial than they were when originally spoken. But, in any case, our appreciation of the fact that Jesus foresaw His death does not depend solely, or even primarily, upon one such passage, for there are other sayings of undoubted authenticity and antiquity, which show, even without so

great a wealth of detail, that Jesus knew what His death would be, and shared this knowledge with His friends. Such sayings are, for instance: "But I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straightened till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50); "Howbeit I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33); "She hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying" (Mark 14:8). Even the most persistent questioner can hardly doubt, in the light of such words as these, that Jesus' death did not go unforetold.

Our conclusion must be that, not only did the martyrdom that was to come loom so largely in the consciousness of Our Lord that His tongue was compelled to give His knowledge utterance, but also that His sense of mission was so urgent that He actually set His face to Jerusalem in order that He might be on hand to meet it. It was this latter fact that apparently caused His disciples such reverent bewilderment. They were not, perhaps, as completely unprepared for the event of His death as is usually asserted. They cannot well have been as intimate with Him as they were without catching something of the contagion of His sorrow, and the intuition of their love must have told them part, at least, of the reason for it. But what must have impressed them with a tragic sense of awe was the deliberate solemnity with which their friend and Master

marched quietly forward to His doom. Granted all their presuppositions about Him, that conviction of predestination, though expressed to them in words that could not have been mistaken, would not find easy assimilation in their mental outlook. From a few simple words in St. Mark we can without difficulty picture some such scene as this—the Master striding on ahead, perhaps alone, perhaps with an occasional companion or so, but at a set pace which taxed their efforts to keep near Him; the rest of the band straggling behind, whispering now and then to one another. Their faces were drawn with weariness and apprehension; their hearts beat fast, and their nerves were tense. We need no rhetoric. "They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid" (Mark 10:32).

It is not an impossible assumption—and, in dealing with the intricacies of human personality, it is always unwise to dogmatize—that Jesus, insofar as He analyzed His motive, may have tended to subordinate the importance of His actual death to the promise of His second coming, and to have regarded it as, under the circumstances, the only way by which He could be set free to return and accomplish His purpose. Doubtless we are not altogether mistaken in attributing to Him some, perhaps unexpressed, idea of this nature. But that it was in the forefront of His consciousness is wellnigh

inconceivable. Such a thought would rob the drama of His death of all independent significance. The Cross, to Jesus, could not have been merely a means to an end. That would have been almost equivalent to weakness, even though it be regarded as the means to the coming of the Son of Man. The nobility of that Cross lies in the fact that it is a new and convincing revelation of the purpose and nature of the Son of Man Himself.

For, as we have already seen, Jesus used the term, "Son of Man," to describe His life under the aspect of present humiliation and suffering as well as of future power and glory. The particular emphasis varied with the need and opportunity of the moment. But, in the latter periods of His life, when He saw that it was inevitable that He must die, it was natural that He should use the term more and more frequently with this first tragic meaning. Added to this was the fact that, with growing intensity, the words of the second Isaiah describing the suffering servant of God were burning themselves into His memory, and with ever greater clearness He saw Himself as fulfilling that fateful destiny. In the person of that strange and appealing figure, suffering is conceived of as redemptive. Its stark ugliness has gone. Its tragedy is wiped away. Out of the poetry of the great prophet there arises a vision of a quality of suffering that is remedial in the lives of others. He who suffers bears his lot without complaint, for it is his portion of love. This is a con-

ception which plays no part in any specifically Messianic scheme. It is completely foreign, in fact, to any historical or prophetic portrait of the Messiah. It has a grandeur and a genius entirely of its own. And that grandeur and genius is overlooked if we try to force the death of Jesus to meet the conditions of any eschatological or apocalyptic requirement, such as that implied in the suggestion that Jesus, when His enemies grew too strong for Him, and other means were unavailing, saw in His death the only means whereby His Kingdom might be established.

Every thinking man or woman has, in the course of time, to work out a philosophy of suffering. It was not otherwise with Jesus. But for Him there were peculiar considerations that can enter into the premises of none other, seeing that the conviction at which He arrived was complementary to the thought of His Messianism, though not measured and determined by its strict logic. There was pre-eminent in it the deciding factor of the will of God. Since nothing, as He held, could take place apart from that will, it was an inevitable conclusion that His own death must, of necessity, be part of God's eternal plan. Prophetic confirmation of this thought was by no means wanting. He sought the Scriptures, and, as we have seen, found, for instance, in the fate of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, that for which He looked, and the finding of which, it may be, He dreaded. But nothing could overrule the unmistak-

able language of what had been foretold. His suffering had been foreordained. "For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was reckoned with transgressors': for that which concerneth me hath fulfillment" (Luke 22:37).

The Messiah's service to men was all-inclusive. It waited upon humanity from the cradle to the grave. A passage in His sayings which immediately and naturally occurs to the mind is that in which Jesus describes His death as epitomizing and enforcing the whole meaning of His life: "For verily the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). How clearly does the echo of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah sound through that one statement! To give His life a ransom for many! Here is the Cross regarded as the supreme act of service for mankind, the final act of ministry in a life of which the chief and most glorious purpose was to minister. It is not relevant too far to press the word "ransom." A great deal has been built upon the later meaning of the word which it cannot justly bear. There is not, and cannot be, any question of barter for the souls of men: and arid discussions as to whom ransom payment is made, such as shook the Church of the Middle Ages, are immaterial and revolting. The truth is that every ministry is exercised at a cost. Every great service is, in its essential nature, sacrificial. It is the lack of that compelling note which vitiates too often

the spasmodic attempts men make to render aid to their fellows. It is not enough to set before the world an ideal programme of service, or to speak in high words about the beauty of sacrifice. There comes a time when action must assume the place of profession, and such teaching must take the form of giving up what is of all most dear—even life itself.

All Jesus' living had been for men, but that was not the end. At last He began to perceive that His dying must be for them too. Who can measure the power that goes forth from utter sacrifice? What is the history of the world but the record of the deeds of men and women who hazarded one prize in order that they or the ones they loved might win a higher? It can hardly be doubted but that Jesus understood the reason for that ultimate necessity. He must have come to regard His death as in a sense vicarious and redemptive—a final tribute of love bestowed upon the men He had set His face to save. Was He not, like the Suffering Servant, to bear the sins of many? It is fruitless to call upon logic to explain how such a miracle could be. Anyone who knows the story of human life must understand that its burdens, even sin itself, can be borne on the loving shoulders of the guiltless. How many a mother, suffering for her wayward son, and by that very act redeeming him, has proved the power of such sympathy! The publicans and sinners would raise their eyes to the Cross, and see their friend stretched upon it,

and feel a passionate desire to be worthy of such devotion. Of course such dying is a redemptive thing. Perhaps, as Jesus thought upon the death that was to befall Him, there arose before His eyes a vision of those many heroes of His race who had died that others might gain release—the Maccabean hero, Eleazar, who had prayed that his blood might be their purification, and that his life might be a ransom for their life; or those other Maccabean martyrs, "through whom our country was purified, they having become a ransom for the nation's sin" (Macc. 4:17, 20, 22, Rawlinson's Translation).

Jesus, then, regarded His death as a supreme act of ministering service to men, as expressing the redemptive value of all His life for them. But, as we study the development of His consciousness, the changing aspect in His sense of mission, we are compelled to ask, with greater precision, whether He was aware of the Cross throughout His entire period of human service, or whether its shadow, unseen at the beginning, gradually materialized into reality. Did He openly face the thought of His death previous to the time when unescapable developments proved its inevitability?

The question is an extremely difficult one to answer with any degree of certainty. And yet, for various reasons, we are forced to the conclusion that the growing weight of circumstances gradually compelled Him to consider and define His judgment about what must for a long time have been implicit in His thinking. The

idea of the Suffering Servant, once more, flamed deep within Him, and marked the trail by which He came to His philosophy of the Cross. There is no hint here of a truth suddenly conceived, or a thought developed merely to circumvent an impasse in an apocalyptic scheme. In that vision of Isaiah, and what it meant to Him, the basic quality of His nature lies revealed.

In the first place, judging from the broad outlines of such history as He knew, Jesus must early have foreseen how His mission would inevitably end. "Woe unto you," He said, "for ye build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them" (Luke 11:47). What was He Himself but a prophet, with a message more searching even than the sublimest preachers of the Old Testament? It was a message, moreover, that was delivered with such courage and authority that it could not but challenge the attention even of those who least desired to hear it. The analogy between what had happened and what would happen again was clear. Human nature, in its depths, remains the same. Criticism is resented. Attacks on place and prerogative are repulsed. Reformers meet with opposition and punishment. Consequently Jesus could hardly have shut His eyes to the plain logic of the situation, for it required no discernment to see that His teaching, being what it was, must provoke the utmost antagonism. It is possible, of course, that He may have entertained the belief, at least for a while, that the ideal of the Kingdom might be so far

realized as the result of His preaching that suffering would have no further place in life's drama. Suffering, as we have seen, like sin, is foreign to the genius of the Kingdom, and must cease as soon as it begins to be established. But that belief, if He ever really held it, has a naïve quality which could not for very long bear the light of facts. He must have known that there would always be some to whom the Gospel of the Kingdom was anathema. If He did not know it at the outset, a very short period of mingling with those He was trying to influence must have given Him the tragic experience of certainty. The ideal of the Kingdom definitely depended upon men's response. That response was, in many quarters, not forthcoming. He was not dealing with a utopian world of fancy, but with a world constituted as it actually is, in large measure hard, cynical, unbelieving, sinning.

And then we should remember that Jesus, throughout, reduced all spiritual obligations to one fundamental duty, which He called love. This love finds its outward expression in terms of ministry or service. His task it was to manifest the quality of such love in its divine aspect. What limits, then, are to be placed upon it? Where does ministry end, and what shall be the climax of service? If love is represented as the glory of God's nature, what are the conditions which consummate its fulfillment? Obviously there are none. There can be no limits, no climax, no arresting conditions. It

would be antithetic to the very genius of that love to carry its expression in ministry or service only so far as the threshold of death. In order to be love at its highest it must transcend all human barriers, and take on the quality of Eternity. But to overcome those human barriers, as the life of men is constituted, means death; and death, as the dying of men is constituted, means suffering. Jesus must, in that clear, intuitive mind of His, have recognized, from the very moment when He first really faced the implications of His mission, the cardinal necessity of pain in a life dedicated to the expression of love.

Again, Jesus insisted, early in His teaching, on the obvious fact that the road to spiritual greatness is the narrow way of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. The atmosphere of the Beatitudes, for instance, is not that of either safety or success. They are full of the implications of self-denial. The blessing of God is lavished upon those who mourn, those who are poor in spirit, those who suffer the pangs of hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who are persecuted in the cause of holiness. These are not the happy, carefree maxims of the superficial moral philosopher, but the tortured discoveries of a soul which has been in travail. The ethic of Jesus is nowhere that of one who felt it possible for Him to ride onwards to an easy conquest, and to bid His disciples follow after Him upon a royal road. It is full of hope—or it would not be the ethic of one

who is adjudged divine—but it is hope that is distilled from the bitterness of despair. Jesus preached a consistent Gospel, and the need for suffering is everywhere implicit in it. He must have known that that implication involved Himself. Unlike some other teachers He did not lay down rules for others which He disregarded in His own person. The Gospel of Jesus is Jesus. As He called upon His friends to suffer, so was He ready to suffer—even on a Cross.

Nowhere more clearly than in this estimate of the mind of Jesus Christ do we see how far the Christian Church has drifted from His vision of true spiritual purpose. There are few pulpits to-day in which the discipline of suffering is consistently preached. There are few congregations to whom the ideal of renunciation appeals with the force of a divine command. Most of us are content to show and be shown the easy road, full of twists and compromises, skirting the abysses of decision and denial. It is a lukewarm, half-hearted Gospel that is taught in His name by the Churches of Christendom. And yet, as we study the force of His appeal to those who knew Him face to face, we realize that it was the very rigour of His demands that drew them. One day we shall rediscover Christianity, and then the peoples of the world will learn to suffer, but they will also learn how blessed and happy a thing it is to be secure.

Finally, it is hard to believe that Jesus waited until

necessity forced it upon Him to discover the spiritual grandeur to which only suffering opens the door. He was before all else a minister. He had doubtless been a minister to mother and brothers and sisters in those far-away days in Nazareth. He knew that ministry involves what the world calls pain—the pain that comes from self-discipline, from the lack of self-realization, from servitude, from denial. But He also must have known that there is only one supreme happiness—and that the happiness that comes from overcoming self in loyalty to a cause. The Prayer Book is very wise when it speaks of God's service as perfect freedom. Jesus knew that suffering, even to the end, is one of the most fulfilling opportunities mankind is ever offered. He knew that the right relation to it calls for an activity that is nothing less than divine. There is greatness in the ability to suffer patiently and triumphantly. There is greatness in the power that turns the destruction of pain into the constructiveness of purpose. He must have known, from those very early days, that suffering is temptation; and He must have realized that, the greater the temptation, the more glorious must be the spirit that rises above it. Hence His pre-eminence upon the Cross, His almost pathetic eagerness to endure it. Only by such an experience of pain and horror could His spirit be tested sufficiently to show that its quality held no earthly alloy, but was refined by the pure radiance of perfection that is lighted only by God.

The truth, it may well be, is beyond the power of any student, however reverent and sympathetic, adequately to visualize and describe. The moods of Jesus do not lend themselves to categories, and the spiritual experiences of Jesus lead into fastnesses of the soul too remote and lofty for man to follow. But the impression the record leaves behind is that His conception of His office deepened as time went on. He came to have always a clearer recognition of the meaning of life, and of God's purpose for Him on earth; and that recognition became at last so coloured by the meaning of Eternity that, when death moves towards Him, He has the power to transform it. It is no longer a tragic destiny; it has all the conditions of high privilege—provided it is met in a spirit of hopeful surrender, and the good of the world is helped, not hindered, by its acceptance. Jesus, we believe, would have considered His premature death as a catastrophe. When it came, we believe, He acquiesced, knowing that He was called to greater service in another realm. He wanted to live—but life, to Him, was service; and the strength of service was intensified by death.

If one dares to reconstruct Jesus' thought about the Cross, it was to Him both a release and a challenge. He had known discouragement, disillusionment, almost despair. As day followed day, the grounds for these emotions become more compelling. A new approach to the souls of men became imperative; and that new ap-

proach was offered by Calvary. He was not a martyr so much as a pioneer. He went out before His people to discover a new way—and, through the majesty of His courage, His service, and His love, He found it. That He was justified, the history of the world bears witness. By the Cross salvation has been placed within the closest reach of men.

CHAPTER XI

THE PERMANENT CHRIST

Out of the shadows of Calvary rises the beacon light of the Christian faith. For, if Jesus had not died, He could not have risen; and, if He had not risen, it is hard to tell what we should have been worshipping to-day—probably mankind, or the golden calf, or a symbol of nationality or even internationality. But we are told that, in His significant case, there was a Resurrection; and we are told it on such incontrovertible grounds, and by so many witnesses, and with such a wealth of authority, that even the most sceptical must admit that the evidence is well-nigh convincing. Few of us, however, need anything in addition to the statement of St. Paul that the teaching of the Christian faith is vain if Jesus did not rise from the dead, to persuade us that, on that fact of His Resurrection above all others, there rests the reality of our present feeling for Jesus, and our hope for the future vindication of His principles in the centuries that are to be. Even the careless world will admit that there is something different in its regard for Him than in its regard, let us say, for Abraham Lincoln or John Wesley. And that difference is caused

principally by the intuition that, in some mysterious way, Jesus did not die as the others died; or, if He did, death for Him was not so final and uncompromising a destiny.

It is not our concern to discuss here the details of the Resurrection story. Every reader knows that the account has been attacked from countless angles. Some have maintained that He did not die on the Cross, but that His friends took Him away and nursed Him back to strength; others hold the opinion that He was placed in the tomb in a state of stupour or trance, from which He revived, and was thus enabled to free Himself; others believed that He died but that His body was never placed in the tomb, which was accordingly empty to the disciples' gaze on Easter morning; others hold that His reputed appearances after the Resurrection were due to hallucination and wizardry. But the only lines of attack that demand serious recognition to-day are two. One body of critics draws attention to the inevitable process of idealization due to the force of a historic impression. That is to say, they view the circumstantial substantiation of the story as being necessitated by the high and reverent regard in which its chief actor came to be held, in the years after His death. The life of Jesus, they argue, required, in the eyes of those who worshipped Him, some such climax as a supernatural epilogue. The only answer that need be made is that the same argument would apply to almost every

word in the Gospel narrative that represents Jesus as, in any sense, out of the ordinary. We cannot, it would seem, separate this series of events from anything else that savours of uniqueness. All must receive the same critical treatment. The other body of scholars sees in the Resurrection story the adaptation of a nature myth concerning the dying and rising again of the cult-God. This was essentially one of the ideas of the Hellenic mysteries, and not unfamiliar, therefore, to those on the fringe of Christian thought. There is, however, a decisive difference between the conception of the myth and that of orthodox belief. Those who accepted the theory of the myth never actually believed the experience of the cult-God to be fact. They did feel it to be an expressive symbol of the rebirth of nature in the spring, or the reappearance of the sun that had seemed to die. Christianity, on the other hand, made its appeal to a historical event—to what happened to a certain man of Galilee. It is not profitable unduly to argue these opinions. It is not right even to criticize those who held and hold them. It is enough to state that the witnesses to the risen Christ seem credible; that the chances of trickery were very small; that the modern scientific viewpoint of the claim of Energy to be the essence of matter opens wide the door to some very interesting theories in explanation of the possibility of Resurrection; and that it is stretching probability beyond any reasonable limits to suppose that the courage

and conviction of the early Church were inspired by a lie, which, had it been a lie, thousands of contemporary men and women would have been able to disprove. And, most compelling of all, if Jesus did not, in some way, overcome the hold of death, it is hopeless to try to explain the real power He has had, and still does have, over the emotions, the actions, the lives, the love, of countless millions.

There is no power in us to account for the permanent nature of the attraction of Jesus. Such a phenomenon does not yield easily to human rationalization. Its reality can be stated as a fact, and few will venture to make denial. There may be many who find no response to it in their own hearts, but they can hardly fail to allow that it has ruled the destinies of countless other hearts. Mystical literature is full of the records of almost passionate relationships experienced by the worshipper towards Jesus. Through the living strength of Jesus, Francis of Assisi helped to mould the conduct of the world, and Joan of Arc left her imprint on the history of the world. It is no very uncommon experience to hear, even in these so-called materialistic days, from the lips of a modern, well-educated, sophisticated man or woman, an acknowledgment that Jesus is present before them in almost tangible shape, and that their lives are guided, in greater or less degree according to their will, by His living personality. Social reforms are undertaken, not because He once wished them, but be-

cause He wishes them now. Lives are transformed, not in tribute to the memory of a dead saint, but because of a spiritual dynamic that grows stronger day by day. The temptation to revert to the animal is spread before humanity increasingly, as the years go by, through every subtle medium of suggestion in books, plays, moving pictures, and commercial, industrial, professional and political corruption for the sake of money, self-satisfaction, and unprincipled power; but still humanity persists, through the influence of some divine inspiration, in climbing upward. There is little to cause amazement in the fact that mankind is as bad as it is; the astounding fact is that it is as good as it is. And, as we realize the petty, cruel, jealous, selfish natures that lie in most of us, we are driven to the conclusion that it is no unaided effort of our own that is bringing about the miracles of to-day in personal and social life, and will bring even more splendid ones to pass in future generations, but the purpose of a God who will brook no denial—the everlasting, omnipotent God we find in the face of Jesus Christ.

The spiritual force of Christianity lies, as it always has lain, in the fact that "Jesus lives." Without that criterion it would have little, if anything, to commend it. Its philosophy is negligible; its ethics, as we have seen, too fragmentary to provide ground for a system; its summons to devotion too personal to be of lasting benefit if once the object of that devotion has been re-

moved; its revelation of God not sufficiently superior to that of other religions to give it any exclusive claims. Its compelling characteristic is Jesus. And Jesus is not accepted by Christians as the selfless hero of a three years' ministry—however fruitful. He is accepted because that ministry seems to stretch out through indefinite ages to be a comfort and a promise to all the men that ever shall be born.

The classical example of the effect of the risen Jesus is St. Paul. And his testimony, given in his own words and over his own signature, no one has thought seriously of impugning. Of course he may have been an epileptic: he may have been subject to fits, trances, hallucinations. But the record of his life would hardly make the supposition that these abnormalities, if they existed, were responsible for his philosophy and his ministry credible to anyone who did not have an overwhelming obsession of scepticism. His reasoning is that of a logical thinker; his style is that of an educated man; his preaching is that of a reasoning debater; his influence is that of a well-balanced moralist. There is not a trace, in all that we know of him, of any mental eccentricity—save his one experience on the road to Damascus. If we assume that that experience was the result of a subjective mental state, we are at liberty to do so. But it is perhaps unnecessary to point out that the hypothesis that the thought and conduct of the

entire world has been transformed by the momentary subjective mental state of a single, unimportant man is a difficult one to maintain.

What marks St. Paul out as the significant example of the effect of the risen Jesus on a human soul is not only the results of his conversion, but, more convincingly, his antecedent history. He was not one of those who was looking for Jesus to come to him. Quite the contrary. He was one of those who hated everything that this man Jesus stood for, both in His own person and in the lives of others. In most of those who have intimately realized the presence of their Master there has been at least a spirit of receptiveness. In St. Paul there was a spirit of violent and aggressive opposition. And it was while he was wholeheartedly occupied in prosecuting that opposition that the call came. There is no question about the accuracy of the story. St. Paul would have gained nothing but contempt by improvising it. And it remains for psychologists to explain, if they can, how a man, vitally engaged in the process of carrying to a climax one particular ambition, can suddenly reverse his entire philosophy, and embrace instantaneously the very opposite of that to which he had given his life—unless it be that an intensely vivid personal experience intervened. But we do not know—and St. Paul never tells us—of any intensely vivid personal experience that could have intervened, save one.

And that was the dramatic appeal, made to his better nature, by the Victim of his persecution Himself. Jesus appeared unto him in the way.

There are two elements in the account we have of this drama of conversion that throw light upon Jesus' conception of His own self-permanence—a conception which, as we shall see, must have been impelling within Him, and powerful in its effect upon His consciousness of His mission. The first is the impression we are given that this conversion is less for the sake of St. Paul than it is for the sake of Jesus. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Is there not something very personal and very plaintive in that question? Did not Jesus imply that His own feelings were deeply involved? Was He not sentient, affectionate, hopeful? Was there, in that sentence, any suggestion that His personality was in any way different from the personality that His friends had known when He trod the earth? The command given to St. Paul does not sound like a divine fiat; it is more akin to the gentle remonstrance tendered by a mother to her child. Jesus had bound men to Him by the ties of brotherhood. They obeyed Him and followed Him because they trusted Him and were fond of Him. That was the criterion of their conversion. It is not strange that, to win St. Paul, He should have essayed the same approach.

Secondly, in the addition that St. Paul himself makes to St. Luke's account in the Acts of the Apostles, we

detect a note of permanent authority in the suggestion that it would never be of any profit to him to fight against this admonition. It was as useless for him to oppose the guidance as it was for a beast of burden to refuse the goad. We seem to feel the implication that, if by any chance this time he escaped subjection, the pressure would be continued until he surrendered. Jesus, dead or alive or risen, did not put His hand to the plough and look backward. And perseverance is a sign of life. It was no withered skeleton grasp that held Saul to his accounting; but the warm enduring grasp of friendship and need which would relinquish its vigour never.

No dream, no trance, no illusion, could have affected St. Paul in the way in which his actual conversion did. From dreams and trances and illusions there would have been a revulsion. The convert would later have expressed doubt and argument. But not for a moment did St. Paul hesitate, and not for an instant, in the long years afterwards, did he allow a question as to his commission to arise. He had seen the Lord. He based his claim to the title of Apostle on that fact. That the Lord had died on a cross, in full view of hundreds, some while before, did not alter his conviction. He had seen the Lord. And his ministry showed all the earmarks of the truth of that conviction. Therefore Jesus lived.

It would not be difficult to find, in the record and

tradition of the early Church, innumerable instances of this feeling of the permanence of Jesus' personality—instances not, perhaps, so dramatic as that presented to us in the experience of St. Paul, but quietly assertive of the knowledge that the Master was alive and at work. After all, the history and development of that Church is unintelligible unless its evolutionary power can be shown to reside in some tremendous conviction that brooked the contradiction of no logic and no persecution. The conviction, in expression, took the form of the certainty of the Parousia, the Second Coming. It was only for a while that Jesus and His disciples were to be parted. He would be at hand, in His own good time, to comfort and direct them, as He had comforted and directed them before. Their immediate problem was as to the most beneficial way in which to spend the intervening months or years. Some of them decided that, as the space of life was short, and there would be all eternity in which to make amends, the claims of their worldly appetites came first. To others it seemed obvious that, as there would be no need, in the immediate future, for money or lands or families, renunciation of these delights was the way of salvation. Such bestowed themselves in the deserts and the mountains, and waited for the Master's return with such patience as they could summon. Others again thought it best to seize the precious moment for a compelling exposition of Christian service. They wished to show their generation, and

the imminent Lord, how strong in them was the spirit of selfless devotion. They wished, when the final summons came, to be found watching and at work, in obedience to their original commission.

But this argument from convictions that arose after the Resurrection, conclusive as they are, does not answer our question. What did Jesus Himself think? He taught, unequivocally, that He expected to return. The implications of that teaching are definite. To His friends He made it clear that He would be alive, available, completing what He had promised and begun. Jesus, in reality, crucified Himself, in order that His risen influence might be the more widespread. It was not always so. Before, as we have seen, the Cross made shadows across His path, the Kingdom of God was, in His eyes, capable of more or less immediate inauguration. But, as the power of His earthly, bodily ministry showed signs of waning, something else intervened—His conviction of the fact that He would return. Nothing is clearer in the later chapters of His history than His knowledge of His Second Coming.

To His immediate friends Jesus could not be expected to come again unless He were forever alive. They were not summoning back from the tomb the memory of a loved companion. They were waiting for the complete vindication of the permanent triumph of good over evil, of life over death; and their waiting would be in vain unless the being who personified this

triumph was, now and always, making His advent certain. Jesus, to them, was at the moment occupied with all the issues that were involved in the establishment of His supremacy over the wills of men. This presupposed a quality of life which was universal enough and infinite enough to allow them all the privilege of a share in it. Therefore, to them, Jesus was not only busy with the signs that would compel mankind to acknowledge Him as its King; He had also time and effort to spare for the needs of each individual soul.

In all such speculations and decisions the faithful were, of course, merely carrying on the evident anticipation of Jesus. The thought of His death as personal annihilation, or as an episode destined to remove Him forever from touch with the lives His followers were to live on earth, is utterly out of keeping with His philosophy and His character. That the form and method of His influence, as a living force, and the expression of a living personality, should be withdrawn never entered His imagination. He did not try so much to induce His disciples to follow His footsteps on earth as to follow them through the future paths of life everlasting. His approach to them was never in terms which suggested merely a practical and finite life—important as their behaviour in that life was—but in those which spoke of illimitable ages wherein He would share His experiences with them as they shared their hopes with Him. There is nothing about Jesus that would lead us

to suppose that He ever regarded the Cross as final and irrevocable.

The perpetuation of this sense of continued personal communion with Him was the motive that dictated the reverent beauty of the Last Supper. It was His body and His blood, given to His friends that they might have substance and form wherewith to clothe His invisible spirit. It is not out of order here to call upon the evidence of the Fourth Gospel, for we are dealing with the experience of the risen Christ. That evidence makes it clear that, although Jesus may have had no vision of the long stretch of human history, yet He believed the "Remembrance" would be a token of dynamic power to all those who believed that He was the way, the truth, and the life—a token that such words as these had been no idle, empty boast, but the evidence of an ever-continuing love. This purpose of His must have been uppermost in the minds of the immediate recipients at the time, and their acceptance by the Church with that significance is the only explanation of the great and intensive hold of the Communion Service upon the imagination and devotion of Christendom ever since. It is not a memorial, and has never rightly been regarded as a memorial in the sense the word usually conveys, for a memorial suggests the thought of someone who is dead and gone and inactive; it is rather a re-creation of an already existing bond of fellowship and service, which becomes increasingly

effective as it is renewed at stated periods of reverent dedication. Communion is more like the pledge of a handshake between two brothers-in-arms than a tribute of the lips, however heartfelt, to a companion who has fallen in action. That something of this sort must have been in Jesus' mind as He drew near the end, and was faced with the task of making the power of His personality vivid and everlasting to those who had never seen Him in the flesh, is apparent in every line of the records that tell of His Passover with the chosen few.

He seems fully to appreciate the fact that, through all the imperfect stages of human development, men were, in the main, incapable of purely abstract spiritual discernment. That is to say, they needed, as a focus of devotion, something they could touch and see. It was not that they believed any less in His power and presence, though it were unemphasized and invisible, but the majority of them were unable to make Him an effective part of their lives, unless He touched those lives in at least a quasi-physical manner. What we call the grace of sacramentalism is, perhaps, a concession, freely made by Jesus as by most other great religious leaders, to our lack of spiritual intuition. It was not that His life needed expression in a body because of any lack in its own dynamic influence—the spiritual body is, after all, the spirit in action through whatever means the nature of spiritual life demands—but, that the unimpressionable and unimaginative might feel the constant pressure

of a personal relationship, some appeal must be made to the senses. Jesus, the master psychologist, understood the needs of all the world and of all time.

He did not, perhaps, ever stop to consider the quality of life that was involved in permanence. The distinction between body and spirit, so important in the lives of the unphilosophic masses, was to Him, in all probability, an utterly negligible issue. In His eyes all life was God—the life of the sparrows and the lilies as well as that of Peter or Mary Magdalene or Judas Iscariot, though not, in the instance of inarticulate creation, raised to the same power of effectual expression. He Himself must have been so consciously filled with this non-physical quality of life that body and spirit were merged in one perfect union, which was self-realization as it was God-realization. Bodily resurrection was inevitable, seeing that body drew from the same reservoir of energy as spirit—a reservoir which owed its fullness and adequacy to the eternal Father. Modern science is telling us much the same truth in a way that allows of little margin for argument.

The thought found popular portrayal in the legends that grew up around the story of the Ascension. What is the Ascension but a pictorial expression of the fact that the spirit of God transcends the limitations of time and space? It was, perhaps, no very new discovery. The spirit of God had always transcended the limitations of time and space, and men's certainty of the fact had dic-

tated the glorious legends of how, for instance, He had bidden the sun to stand still in the valley of Ajalon, or had brought the waters of the Red Sea together in a heap. Were they not convinced that they had seen Jesus defy all known natural forces by walking upon the sea, and make of time an inconsiderate factor by saying that He had been before Abraham? There can be no doubt that Jesus gave to all who knew Him an impression of other-worldliness—to use a term from the vocabulary of mysticism—which seemed to render unavailable most of the ordinary categories of human experience. The teaching value of the narrative of the Ascension lay, and still lies, in the motif of permanence —the emphasis on the indestructible nature of a life lived in union with God, and the evidence that that life is not a passive, meaningless existence, but a state in which all the elements of personality are freely engaged and freely active. That such an ultimate glory met with the expectation of Jesus, and that, in many respects, it moulded His teaching on earth, is hardly to be questioned by anyone who is in touch with the spirit of the Gospel story.

According to many modern writers, men achieve a kind of spurious immortality as it were by proxy; and they attach to Jesus the suppositions they have worked out for themselves. From this point of view we live in our friends, in the influence we have been able to exert, in the ideals we have helped to implant, and the careers

we have helped to form. There is no question about the significant reality of such results of conscious living. No one has probably ever been a member of any social order without leaving his impress upon it somewhere, for good or evil. A man may have been too weak to affect that order directly, but, even then, he can hardly have failed to induce sympathy, to have called forth service and protection, to have compelled others to be what he could never be himself. He may have been too modest and reserved to exert any claim on the consideration of his fellows, but, even so, the lives of others would imperceptibly have changed to meet his particular approach to them. He could never entirely have lived to himself, and died to himself. The world is far too complex and interrelated for that. Those who disbelieve in personal immortality, of whom there are multitudes to-day, even among the ranks of professing Christians, usually make the boast that this vicarious immortality is sufficient for them—that they want nothing further of hope or promise save that the assurance that the result of their words and actions can never, in the eternal scheme of things, be revoked.

It was not difficult—it is not difficult still—to impute to Jesus the same kind of immortality, for there has never been a man who has exerted so farreaching an influence on the lives of those fortunate enough to cross His path. And this was not done in a corner or in secret. For the recreated beings whom He had touched were to

be found on every hand. Publicans and sinners—certainly! That was to be expected, for any change in their lives must be a change for the better! But it was not alone publicans and sinners. A Roman officer, with his traditional philosophy: a master of Israel, upright and of high esteem in the councils of those who kept the Law: an imperial matron who, for perhaps the first time, knew instinctively that a just man had entered upon her horizon. What difference, we are asked, did it really make whether He lived or died when such examples were at hand to prove that, because of these persons, and the many others who felt as they did, and the teaching and the witness they would hand on, the world in which the descendants of the race must live would never be the same? It is hard to discriminate between the effect of the influence of Jesus radiating down through the centuries of Christian faith, and the power of a living Jesus acting, as a vivid and personal thing, upon the soul of one believer. We have seen how vital the latter was in the case of Saul of Tarsus, but how vital was it to the many others who professed a convincing belief? How vital is it to-day? The pulpit certainly urges the acceptance of Christ as a living reality, and doubtless many of the pews are filled with those to whom this living reality is the substance of their hope. But the weakness of Christendom is nowhere more clearly shown than in that school which speaks of Him in the past tense. "Yes," these Chris-

tians say, "I worship Him because I do not know of anyone who has ever influenced civilization for the better more than He did. He was a great and good man, and I am the better because He lived." How different is this from the Christian dynamic that asserts that I try to do God's will—"Yet not I, but the spirit of Christ which is in me."

Jesus lived, and lives to-day, to draw men into a personal, conscious, effective relationship with God. Now, as in the days of His earthly ministry, the method He uses is that of intimate fellowship with Himself. The fellowship He offers, He offers freely. It is accepted—and the door is opened to the grace of God. No one who tries to picture His purpose for mankind can avoid asking the question—Did He ever contemplate what we mean by the Church? As far as He did, it must have been under this same thought of fellowship. The Church was to be the means to fellowship to the great mass of His followers. The conditions of membership were of the simplest, but, because He stood at the centre, they were highly personal. The fellowship was to be "the company of all faithful people"—faithful to Him. To instill and encourage that faithfulness, all office and organization in the Church must exist. That was as clear to Him as it is to us, as we may easily understand from His strictures upon the inadequacy of certain elements in His own Church to bring men to God. The Church, or fellowship, is not an end, but a

means. When viewed in that light it may serve its only valid purpose—to unite men with God in a living bond of partnership. But those bonds are not dependent upon discipline or law, but upon spirit. No reasonable being can deny that, as Jesus gave of Himself freely to sinner and Samaritan and Roman and any "lesser breed without the law," so He gives Himself freely to the unchurched and the unorthodox. One of the great proofs of His everlastingness is the fact that it is often the unchurched and the unorthodox who are most conscious of His abiding presence. The modern approach to the meaning of the Grace of God is that God continually offers Himself to mankind, is forever knocking at the door of his consciousness, is eternally trying to make Himself heard amid the bustle and turmoil of earthly things, and that the receptive power, though, in many cases, strengthened by the discipline of the Church, depends essentially upon a mystical relationship between the individual and God, rendered obtainable and effective by the constant human sympathy expressed in Jesus Christ.

Jesus certainly meant that His good news should be published through His friends in the coming years. He certainly meant that His influence should be kept alive for the salvation of humanity in the majesty of those friends before the difficult problems of existence. How far, if at all, His vision extended to an organized institution, replete with constitution, charter, and official

custodians, is a matter of controversy, and does not deeply concern us here. But there can be no doubt that, whatever form the development of Christian thought and practice might assume in the course of history, He conceived of Himself, the spirit of His personality, as being the controlling and guiding and compelling factor in it. And this, not primarily through the medium of others, but as a direct personal matter through the agency of that energizing spirit which it was within His will and power to send into the hearts of the world. Jesus was the permanent leader, not the men who were in time to form His spiritual posterity.

This truth has been evident, if not, by any means, to all who call themselves Christians, yet at least to some in every generation since Jesus' time. And those few have invariably been the leading interpreters of their Master's significance. For illustration one need read no further than the writings of the true mystics in order to learn how vivid and magnetic a force is that ever-present, living Christ. Sometimes the language in which the sense of His nearness is expressed seems exaggerated beyond the bounds of ordinary reason, as the mystic finds the accepted use of words inadequate to paint the brightness of the light that shines in darkness, the almost physical ecstasy that is too exquisite for description, the driving impulse that seems to have no motive, the peace that, in very truth, passes all understanding. But these experiences were real, and, in fact, are of not

uncommon occurrence even in the scientific and calculating age in which we live. In many a humble, and otherwise undistinguished life to-day, there are periods of blessedness, hours of a selfless passion, moments of sanctified endeavour, which gain their power because they are derived directly from Jesus. And these manifestations of the response of the spirit within to the spirit without are not confined to men and women who are, in any apparent sense, other-worldly, dreamers, inactive, visionaries. They are found among those of great practical ability, people of affairs, incisive, dominant. If a reader wearies, as some readers do, of the enthusiastic ecstasies of the professed mystic, and dismisses him as a being of a disordered brain and overdeveloped imagination, it is profitable to remember that the impression of the living Jesus has exerted a similar influence on men of a totally different type from the recluse in his cell or the hermit in his cave—on some of the great revivalistic preachers, men of iron and fire. The accounts of the Anabaptists and the Seekers of the seventeenth century in England, of the early Puritan settlers and their immediate descendants in North America, of the Wesleys and their followers, of Campbell, of Fox, of Moody, are filled with records which tell, in language that even a mystical saint need not despise, of the glory and pre-eminence of the living Christ. These were not men whose vision might be warped by flagellation or starvation; they were not con-

fined to a narrow round of contemplation and devotion; they were not under the direction of an ecclesiastical superior, or the discipline of an esoteric order: they were men who fought and wept, who knew the frenzy of opposition and hostility, who lived essentially in the world that surrounded them. But Jesus was still supreme, because He was alive.

Surely Jesus never pictured it otherwise, or desired any other advertisement. He was not a man of solitude, except in those strength-giving moments which He shared with the Father, but essentially a fighter, a man of action, a prophet. It is fitting that He should still be the standard-bearer wherever right is opposed to wrong, the will of the moment to the will of eternity, the power of the devil to the power of God. That was His eternal mission as He appears to have conceived of it. If He had been a pale ascetic He might have been doubtful as to whether His life would be strong enough to fulfill all the vicissitudes of human living. But, being the embodiment of all that was virile and enduring, He knew that no crisis could ever arise that He could not overcome. He must have foreseen Himself as man's guide in the perplexing desert of sin, man's answer to the manifold riddle of destiny. Jesus, we believe, faced the Cross, as believers face death in all its forms, knowing that, when one gate closes, another opens. And He had the measureless advantage over all others in that He knew that the quality of His life was such that it

had an inexhaustible supply of strength to lend. For most of us the struggle to be worthy of our best selves is sufficient.

Finally, there is a permanent element in the character of Jesus, of which He must Himself have been aware in His constant contacts with men, women, and children—and that is His amazing power of drawing people to Him, and holding them by Him indefinitely. There are people in our own experience who have a magnetic attraction. They send out an almost electric influence, and to come within the radius of their eyes or voice or handshake is to submit to them. It was so with Him in Galilee and Judaea, but to a degree utterly beyond that of any one else who ever lived—for, in their first meeting with Him, it was not unusual that men should give Him, not only the tribute of affectionate regard, but the unquestioning surrender of a life. Occasionally, through the pages of history, this phenomenon occurs in the case of certain great friendships, but never, except in the case of Jesus, has a man of no social prestige, no intellectual reputation, no power of bribery or reward, managed, merely by the charm of His unassisted personality, to win the unfaltering allegiance of unnumbered different, and apparently uncongenial, lives. And this loyalty, we are inclined to believe, was, at least in the beginning, due, not to what He said or what He did, but to the undefinable grace that shone about Him. Men came to Him

they knew not why: men stayed with Him, not because He begged them to, but because they could not go away.

But the most astounding evidence of power was yet to come. In every physical human sense He seemed to die; and, when the children of men die, they leave a memory, enduring for a while, which has in it the romance of retrospect, and enables those who loved them to continue in their foot-steps. But Jesus brought into human experience a new impulse. Not only did those who knew Him strive manfully to be worthy of Him, feeling around them His enkindling love as in the days when they walked and ate and slept beside Him; but millions of others, who knew nothing of His face or earthly presence, have come so strongly to realize His power over them that they have changed their lives, forfeited their individuality, and even gone to their death for His sake. Such a tribute has been vouchsafed to no one else who ever lived. That our friends should feel kindly disposed towards us, and try to carry out our wishes after we are gone, we take for granted. But that the generations yet to be born should be intimately concerned about us, and show us even a fraction of personal homage, is a dream far too fantastic to be even momentarily entertained. And yet this was the case with Jesus—this is the case with Jesus to-day. Multitudes of men and women still feel that the man of Galilee, about whom they know very little, and whose

very name, it may be, is an offence to their friends, draws them to Him with a strength that is beyond that of mortal friendship, and exacts of them sacrifices and services which they would hesitate to give even to those who are flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone.

No point is won by gainsaying the fact. What is the effect to-day of the eternal Christ save the effect we see in the faces of the devout, the converted, the truly Christian? There is no hint there of mere reverence for a dead Saviour, or respect for the memory of a beautiful life, beautifully lived for the sake of all the world. There is every proof there of an ever-present love, that transcends the loves of earth as God's sunset transcends the electrical devices of a stage. The hold of a permanent Christ is not the hold of a remembrance, however holy, but the magnetism of a personality which is so real that no scientific or philosophical argument can ever break its power, and no consideration of time nor distance can ever weaken its appeal. Men come to Jesus, not because of what He was to their remote ancestors in the faith, but to what He is to the nervous, hurrying, machine-ridden, sophisticated children of to-day.

Had He not known that this would be so—that He would be a never-failing source of help and comfort throughout all generations—He would never have worded His message as He did. After all, He sent

them into the world to preach, not His Gospel, but Himself. That Gospel, without Him, was an inarticulate, inchoate, depersonalized message. All that gave it form and meaning and effect was the character that lay behind it. And it was upon the spirit of that character, and not upon the Gospel, that the allegiance of every true age of Christendom has been bestowed. Jesus must have known that, without Himself to interpret the call, His mission was frustrated almost before it was expressed. Therefore He dared to revolutionize the world, knowing that He would be on hand to counsel and direct. He knew all that we know, and more—His power to win and His power to hold.

As to how far He was able to visualize the changing needs of men it is not for us even to conjecture. But, in the light of the power of His resurrection, which He Himself predicted and fulfilled, He must have felt that, whatever changes might come, the new life of God, mediated by Him to men, could never fail to manifest its supremacy. If he could overcome death, then there was no evil known to man that could successfully exert its sway against Him. In that assurance, which we believers share with Him, it is enough for us to be content. We are persuaded that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the

love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The important part of those verses is the present tense in the last clause—for St. Paul was writing after the cross on Calvary had rotted away.

What did Jesus think? In these pages a sincere effort has been made, without unduly drawing on supposition or elaboration, to answer that question from the indications given by the writers of the first three Gospels. It is too much to hope that the reader will regard that answer as adequate, because, in all probability, the mind of Jesus is, in many of its aspects, unfathomable. And yet, in other respects, it is perhaps more susceptible of analysis than the mind of any other man of whom we have record, for the reason that it was controlled, to a greater extent than in any other instance, by definite convictions. Most of us have some convictions, but none of us allows them to dominate his entire life. Jesus did. And so clear cut are they that any record of His life must, in a very large measure, be an expression of their effect in word or action. At times, as happens to all of us, He was torn between two decisions, but usually the conflicting elements in His thought are obvious and intelligible, because each represents one recognizable aspect of absolute truth. His struggle was between the rival claims of two duties or two responsibilities, never between two inconsistent methods of rationalization. And so He stands before us, not merely as a saviour of the souls of men, but as an example to

the minds of men. And it is not beyond reason to believe that, if the world ever comes to a realization of the mind of Christ, it will solve the riddle of existence. For in that mind was perfect clarity, perfect understanding, and perfect sympathy.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01020 2002